

Conifers naturally shed needles

By Kym Pokorny
Correspondent

CORVALLIS — Watching trees turn bewitching shades of orange, red, and yellow is part of the magic of autumn, but seeing the needles on conifers fade to yellow and fall to the ground can be unnerving.

Such botanical behavior is natural, said Paul Ries, urban forestry specialist for the Oregon State University Extension Service. Evergreen conifers shed needles just as deciduous trees lose leaves; it just happens over a longer period of time.

“The difference is that with deciduous trees they do it all at once in a shorter time span,” he said. “Evergreen conifers shed needles from summer through fall. And those that fall are only a fraction of the total needles.”

Depending on the species, it can take anywhere from two to seven years for a conifer to lose and grow all its needles.

“When you look at a conifer, yes, it’s technically evergreen because it’s always green,” Ries said. “But you’re not looking at the same needles all the time. They shed the oldest needles every year. People think they’re not in good health. But in reality they’re just going through the normal cycle.”

The outermost needles are



PHOTO BY SELBE LYNN

Evergreen conifers drop their needles just like deciduous trees, but over a long period of time.

the newest, so those dropping are in the interior and less likely to be noticed. If other areas of the tree are turning yellow, then it’s time to get advice from your local Extension office or a certified arborist. In the past two years, large numbers of Oregonians have watched some of their conifers — largely Douglas-firs — turn brown and sometimes die. That damage, Ries

said, is the result of drought and also a problem that should be referred to experts.

A few conifers do lose all their needles in one year, namely western larch (*Larix occidentalis*), dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) and bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*). So if you see one of these trees without needles in winter, no need to worry.

Court drops rape conviction of Bend man

By Gillian Flaccus
Associated Press

PORTLAND (AP) — The Oregon Court of Appeals vacated the conviction of a man who was sentenced to prison for raping a woman he met on a dating website.

The appellate court found a district judge erred in denying a motion that would have required the woman to comply with a subpoena and turn over her computer for a private inspection by the court.

Thomas Bray’s attorney repeatedly sought computer evidence before trial after learning the woman told investigators she had gone online to look for information about Bray and the legal definition of rape.

The case will return to Deschutes County Circuit Court unless state Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum decides to appeal to the Oregon Supreme Court, Deschutes County District Attorney John Hummel said in a phone interview.

If Rosenblum doesn’t do that, then the case goes back to the district judge who must decide whether to consider the computer evidence in light

of a 2016 appeals court decision that gives more guidance on such issues, he said.

“It’s hard enough for a victim of sexual assault to come forward, but now if a victim’s thinking, ‘I have to come forward, but I also have to show every Facebook post I’ve ever made, every email I’ve ever sent’ — this is chilling for survivors of sexual assault,” Hummel said.

Bray, who is from Bend, was sentenced to 25 years in prison for the February 2011 rape of the 23-year-old woman. Bray taught at Central Oregon Community College and was a licensed anesthesiologist.

The victim met Bray on the online dating website match.com and went back to his condominium with him for a glass of wine after their first date.

Over the course of five hours, she told investigators, Bray raped, beat and choked her, causing her at one point to lose consciousness.

During her police interviews, the woman mentioned the internet searches. Bray’s attorney had said a review of her computer hard drive could help exonerate his client.

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The sophomore homecoming float had a Ghost Busters theme.

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