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## Yews on First?

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## GARDEN NOTES

# YEWS ON FIRST?

*By Dennis Hinkamp*

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It rhymes with stew and sounds like you and ewe but the yew you plant is just perfect for most Utah landscapes.

Yews are one of my favorite evergreens because they are easily grown, and have a graceful shape says Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist.

They have a reddish to brown colored bark, with deep green, soft leaves, he says. The leaves or needles, are dark, somewhat glossy on the top and normally a lighter green underneath. Unlike most other needle-type evergreens, yews have soft pliable leaves that are flat. Another valuable trait of the yew is its ability to recover from an awful pruning. Unlike other conifers, yews grow back quickly and recover from deep pruning cuts.

“Yews are commonly used in shady areas even though many varieties can be planted in full sun locations,” Goodspeed says. “Because they are shade-loving, people often think that they can withstand heavy or excessive watering but, in reality, more yews die of over-watering than lack of water. The soggy soils common in shady areas can lead to root rot. So, water yews carefully, especially because of their shady location.”

There are only a few insects and diseases that attack yews, he says. Of those, strawberry root weevils are the most common pest problem. The larva of this insect feed on the roots and the adults eat little notches out of the leaves.

The English yew can grow into a tall tree if left unpruned. Goodspeed says. However, with a little effort, they can be shaped into a nice tall hedge or used as a screen. Repandens is a dwarf variety that only reaches a size of about three feet tall with a six foot spread.

The Japanese yew is not usually grown in Utah because some of the varieties are not hardy enough, he warns. However, those that can withstand northern Utah winters are attractive and versatile. The most popular yew variety, Anglojap, is found at many of our local nurseries. These generally grow into small to medium-sized shrubs that work well as a hedge, screen or planted in mass.

The Hicks yew is probably the one most homeowners plant, Goodspeed says. It can grow to more than 10 feet, but is normally pruned to stay at about four feet. It is columnar in habit, and can be used as a formal or informal hedge. Brownii is another columnar-shaped variety that can

be pruned to a desired shape and size.

The variety Densiformis, called the Dense yew, grows wider than it is tall, he says. It can reach four feet tall, with a spread that is nearly double its height. The Dark Green yew which can also be purchased in most Utah nurseries, is a bit slower growing, and reaches a size of four feet tall and four feet wide.

“If you are searching for a nice foundation planting, a hedge or even a screen, consider getting a yew or two,” Goodspeed says. “Most nurseries and garden centers have no problem identifying what you mean when you ask for a yew.”

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