

Conifers stay green in winter

FALL is the season when we all admire the many kinds of broad-leaf trees that turn amazing colors. Even during summer, their many shades of green make the landscape lush.

In winter, the green of coniferous trees adds contrast to the neutral earth. They are our Christmas trees because they brighten our rooms and spirits with their everlasting color.

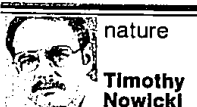
ONLY ONE coniferous tree in our area does not stay green all year — the tamarack.

Though it may not stay green all year, its fall finale more than compensates for its unusual habit. In fall, golden needles of tamarack weave a tapestry that adorns the forest edge.

Spruce trees planted by many homeowners to add color to their yard stand out prominently against winter's white palette. A thick, waxy exterior protects needles from desiccation.

If you look at the yews in your yard, you will see the top side of the leaf is darker than the bottom. Since the top is exposed to the penetrating rays of the sun, it must have a thicker protective coating.

A close look at the bottom will reveal a lighter color. Junipers and hemlocks in fields and forest display



nature
Timothy Nowicki

two very light stripes on the underside of their leaves. These two stripes are concentrations of cells that allow the leaf to breathe.

GREEN PLANTS produce sugar and oxygen through a process known as photosynthesis. Oxygen and carbon dioxide are exchanged through these openings.

Not only do leaves have opening from which to breathe, but the little darkened irregularities on the bark of a beech or birch tree serve as opening for gas exchange also.

Dense foliage of evergreens is also a good place for night-roosting birds. They provide protection from predators and the cold. In order to maintain what heat they have, birds roost closer together as the temperature drops.

Throughout history, and especially Michigan history, evergreen trees have played a major role.

The writer is staff naturalist at Independence Oaks County Park.



The top side of the yew's leaf (upper left) is darker than the bottom. The top needs a protective coating from the penetrating rays of the sun.

Ice sculptures have family theme

"The YMCA and the American Family" is the theme for the Plymouth Ice Sculpture Spectacular on display until Sunday.

"We want to remind the half-million spectators who will attend the 10-day ice-carving festival that the American family has an important role in forging tomorrow's leaders and in instilling those eternal values that build character," said hotel operator R. Scott Lorenz, co-organizer of the event.

"In building the family up, we could think of no better agency to work into our theme than the YMCAs of America," added Lorenz.

THE ICE sculpture showing is in Kellogg Park on Main Street, at The Gathering, and on surrounding downtown business streets.

Oakland drivers should take I-275 south, exit at Ann Arbor Road, go west about 1 1/4 miles, and turn north onto Main Street.

Professional chefs and culinary arts students will use the theme for their major works involving 40-50 blocks of ice and for some individual sculptures.

Midwest Ice Inc., the major sponsor, will use Disney characters around the Disneyland Castle for its prime display, and for another will carve the favorite of today's children — dinosaurs.

Oakland Community College students will carve a giant "Y" and surround it with figures from the YMCA's logo — a jogger, someone doing judo and an exerciser.

AMONG THE events:

- Jan. 14 — professional competition in the morning.
- Jan. 13 — three-man, five-block regional team competition.

Sculptures are available for free public viewing 24 hours daily, and other events are scheduled during the festival.

Many of the estimated half-million spectators will arrive by bus for daytime visits.

Decked parking is available in an area surrounded by Ann Arbor Trail, Main, Pennington Avenue, and Harvey. A large municipal parking lot is immediately behind The Gathering at the north end of Kellogg Park.

Know weather to beat storms

Your best defense against winter storms is keeping informed about weather conditions.

"A few hours warning can be the difference between being caught in a storm or being safe at home," said Gail Christie, manager of the Oakland County EMS/Emergency Management. "We urge all Oakland County residents to stay informed about weather conditions in their area."

Residents can get news on changing weather by:

- Listening to local television and radio forecasts.
- Purchasing a tone alerting receiver system through EMS for businesses and residences. The receiver system is activated when the National Weather Service issues a severe weather alert. The Oakland County EMS/Emergency Management's 24-hour personnel then broadcast detailed weather information over the receivers.

It helps to know terms used by the weather service. Most common terms are:

- "Winter Storm Watch" — severe winter weather conditions may affect your area.
- "Winter Storm Warning" — severe winter weather conditions may affect your area.
- "Blizzard" — a heavy accumulation of snow accompanied by winds of more than 35 miles per hour.

Piano guild will meet

"The Transfer Student" will be the panel topic when the National Guild of Piano Teachers, Oakland-Macomb chapter, gathers at 9:30 a.m. Friday, Jan. 20. Meeting place is Evola Music Store, 2184 S. Telegraph, Bloomfield Hills.

Rita May will be moderator. Guests may attend for a \$2 fee. Information about the group is available from Caryl Alessi, president, at 625-8852.

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