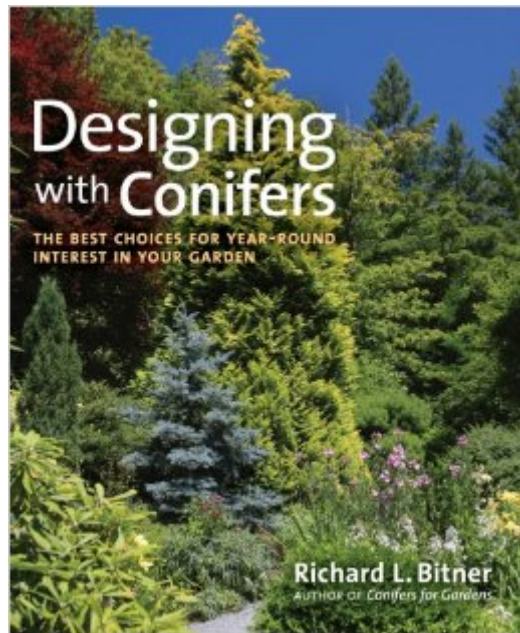


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# Designing With Conifers: The Best Choices For Year-Round Interest In Your Garden



## Synopsis

With blue, green, and gold foliage and shapes ranging from spiky to weeping, conifers have the potential to be garden design stars. But they are commonly misused in gardens and landscapes, leading to looming spruces squashed against a house or rows of kettledrum-shaped yews along a sidewalk. When used correctly and creatively, conifers can be star players in creating beautiful, long-lasting plant combinations or serene backyard havens. *Designing with Conifers* shows readers exactly how to choose the best conifers for specific needs. Chapters cover shape, color, and conifers for specific sites and conditions, including front gardens, hedges and screens, topiary, dwarf conifers, shade gardens, Asian-style gardens, bonsai, and miniature railroad gardens. Also includes useful appendices that list of conifers for various problems and conditions, like conifers for areas plagued by deer and the best conifers for Christmas trees and Southern gardens. Each section is enlivened with gorgeous color photographs. Whatever landscape situation or challenge a gardener designer faces, *Designing with Conifers* shows how to make the best choice from this beautiful, useful, and versatile group of plants.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Richard Bitner's *Designing With Conifers* changes our way of thinking about conifers. He moves conifers away from the stereotypical, overgrown and oversized, mulch and meatball foundation plantings and plants them creatively into our gardens. Bitner emphasizes that the benefits of gardening with conifers are that they "form a backbone" and provide a "strong architectural

framework" that unifies our gardens throughout all seasons. Conifers are long-lived and change only slowly over time. Conifers add structure and provide interest and continuity to our winter gardens as the herbaceous perennials and annuals slip out of focus. "Conifers give a sense of permanence." Conifers are versatile. Bitner assures us, "Whatever landscape situation or challenge exists, there is an appropriate conifer to be had for that site." Once Bitner convinces us in his introduction of the versatility and advantages of growing conifers as "garden plants", the next three chapters help us "make better choices when selecting conifers for our landscapes or integrating them into our mixed borders." Characteristics to consider are shape, color, and conifers for specific sites and conditions. Bitner dedicates a chapter to each of these then details each with stunning photographs. He gives abundant examples of available cultivars followed by a brief physical description and desired traits of each, all organized alphabetically according to genus and specific epithet. Bitner's descriptions of the benefits offered by using conifers in our gardens are informative from a design perspective and they make the gardener think more deeply about the effect we might want to achieve as well as the emotional expression we might want to evoke in our gardens.

Those of us who are gardeners in the Pacific Northwest are fortunate to have wonderful forests of conifers nearby in which to study how conifers are arranged in nature. The ability to translate that "natural" conifer look from the source forest into a pleasing conifer garden within a residential setting, takes knowledge and experience with the immense array of conifer species available today for garden designers and homeowners alike. Richard Bitner has done a great job of creating a readable volume that brings into one resource so many aspects of creating the modern landscape with the use of conifers for year-round interest. I was fortunate to be one of the many garden designers whose gardens he visited while researching his book more than 2 years ago. This book is written not only for garden designers or other professionals of the landscape field, but for all who love gardening and want to improve their own abilities in the use of conifers. The introduction does a great job of over-viewing what will be tackled in the book. I like how he deals with inappropriate uses of conifers such as placing them too close to a home, giving conifers a bad rap which often results in expensive removals within 10 years of planting them. There are specific details on soil requirements, intermixing conifers within beds and borders, and utilizing the wide range of conifer needle colors to complement your garden design. As a designer I find particularly useful the chapters on conifer shape, plus the extensive lists of species and cultivars which meet these shape requirements. When designing with conifers it's most important to know the 10 year estimated height and width variables of a specific plant and many of these are included here.

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