

Norway Spruce, *Picea abies*

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Summary

Foliage: About 0.75 inches long; needle-like; evergreen

Height: About 60 feet

Spread: About 30 feet

Shape: Conical

Main Features

Norway spruce is a medium to large conical conifer. When young (first 10 years or so), the plant is stiffly conical. With age, the secondary branches hang from the primary horizontal branches. This pendulous branch habit confers a very graceful effect to the tree. This species is a popular conifer but is often misplaced in the landscape because the mature size is generally not taken into consideration. For example, a relatively small Norway spruce planted in front a house looks just fine; in 20 years (and thereafter) the tree will grow to dimensions that overtake the view of the house. This species has a relatively fast growth rate when young. There are numerous cultivars (over 150) that vary in size (growth rate), form, and needle color. There are several diminutive cultivars that grow only a few inches per year. For example, 'Little Gem' has a mounded form and grows about 2 inches per year.

Plant Needs

Zone: 3 to 7

Light: Full sun

Moisture: Average to somewhat dry

Soil type: Average to somewhat poor

pH range: Acid to somewhat alkaline

Functions

Norway spruce is suitable for locations that are in need of a large evergreen conifer. Plants can be used as a privacy screen providing there is ample space. The dark-green foliage makes this species a good choice as a background species; the dark foliage color creates a dramatic contrast to flower show of small trees/large shrubs.

Care

If planted in the correct location (sunny, well-drained soils with ample space), Norway spruce requires very little care. Older trees will produce numerous 6-inch-long cones which may pose a maintenance issue.

Additional Information

There are over 150 Norway spruce cultivars in the trade, many of which are dwarf (slower growing than the species). A few popular ones are: 'Nidiformis' which has a low mounded form that grows about 2 inches per year; several cultivars of forma *pendula* that have an irregular habit and pendulous branching (e.g., 'Inversa', 'Pendula', and 'Reflexa').