



European Larch *Larix decidua*

Alex X. Niemiera, Professor, School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, Virginia Tech

Summary:

Foliage: At tip of branch about 1 inch long needles borne singly; needles not at tip are 1 inch long and borne on short stems (spurs) in clusters (about 35 needles); deciduous

Height: About 75 feet

Spread: About 25 feet

Shape: Conical with pendulous secondary branches

Main Features: European larch is a medium/large deciduous conical conifer (one of the few conifer species that drops its foliage in the fall). The secondary branches are pendulous and give the tree a very graceful appearance. The fall foliage colors vary from fair to good. This species is suitable for USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 3 to 6, thus it is not suitable to the heat of the south. European larch is suitable as a specimen plant (used alone as focal point), in mass, or as an accent plant. It has a medium to fast growth rate in its youth and is slow-growing when mature. European larch is a valuable species for landscapes, especially for landscape species diversity, but is not typically found in garden centers.

Plant Needs:

Zone: 3to6

Light: Full sun

Moisture: Average to somewhat dry

Soil type: Average well-drained soil

pH: Acid

Functions:

European larch is suitable as a specimen plant (used alone as focal point), in mass, or as an accent plant. Since it is deciduous (less visual weight in winter), the landscape use of this species is more aligned with deciduous trees.

Care:

No special care is needed.

Additional Information:

The cultivar 'Pendula' is a shrub form with weeping branches. Japanese larch (*Larix kaempferi*) is a close relative and is similar to the European Larch with the exception that it is somewhat less hardy and somewhat more heat tolerant (suited to zone 4 to 7).