

Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*)

Nebraska Forest Service

Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) is a native of Norway and northern Europe as the name implies. When Europeans first began to settle the new world (now known as the United States) they brought all their worldly belongings with them. This sometimes included trees from their homeland so that they could still remain connected to their homeland. Often times, that tree was a Norway spruce. It is not unusual to travel rural roads in the northeastern part of the United States and see two Norway spruce standing side by side either in front of an old farmhouse or alone. These are places where original families had settled. Many of these older spruce trees are beginning to die of old age as our country grows older.



The wood of Norway spruce is strong for its weight. It is used for pulp as well as lumber. This species of spruce is also used to make the sound boards of violins, guitars and other stringed instruments because of its resonance characteristics. Stradivarius reportedly used Norway spruce that had previously been used as ship oars for constructing his violins. The pitch or sap of the Norway spruce is used for varnish and sometimes in medicines. It also makes a nice Christmas tree.



Norway spruce is a part of the pine family and is now found through much of the United States and Canada. It is the most common spruce after the Colorado spruce (*Picea pungens*). The tree can be found in home landscapes as well as on the farm in windbreaks. It has also been used as a living snow-fence and is very beneficial as wildlife cover. It prefers a moist, cool climate but can be adaptable to warmer, drier weather.

Norway spruce is one of the fastest growing of the spruce species and can reach a height of 80 feet or more. The largest Norway spruce in the United States is in Durham, New Hampshire and is over 15 feet in circumference and 108 feet tall.

Norway spruce can adapt to a variety of soil and moisture conditions. It has a very strong central leader with horizontal side branches that have a sweeping pendulous character as the tree matures. It takes on an almost majestic appearance. As a member of the pine family it is also related to fir, larch, pine, and hemlock. The dark green color of the foliage is one of its more attractive features. The needles are short and stout and the cone is long and slender.

While Norway spruce is a very adaptable tree it will not survive in wet soils. Many a Norway spruce has died due to over-watering and improper use of automatic sprinkler systems. It prefers full sun but will also do well in partial sun situations.

Spider mites are the only serious pest of Norway spruce.