

Blue Spruce

Picea pungens

Colorado Spruce

Blue Spruce lends a formal effect to any landscape with its stiff, horizontal branches and blue foliage. It is commonly used as a landscape or ornamental specimen. There are a number of cultivated varieties specifically designed for the home landscape. Early settlers chose Blue Spruce to make wind breaks due to its naturally dense growth. In more modern times, the tree is planted close to homes to discourage prowlers with its very sharp needles. In the intermountain west and the east, the Blue Spruce is widely grown in Christmas tree plantations. Blue Spruce is Colorado's state tree. Blue Spruce is the most drought tolerant of all the spruces.



Identification

Leaves

Evergreen, needles, stout, 1/2 to 1", dull gray-green to bright blue (variable tree to tree and within same tree) with very sharp tips.



Flower/Fruit

Monoecious; inconspicuous light green flower in spring maturing to an elongated purplish-red turning light brown oval cone 3-6" long.



Bark/Wood

Thin and scaly, flaking off in small circular plates up to 4 inches across.



Form

Medium sized evergreen tree with pyramidal form when grown in the open. Straight trunked. Form becomes cylindric with age or competition.



Uses

Primary use is in the landscape as ornamental or specimen tree. Used as fuel wood, but burns quickly. Popular Christmas tree. Provides good nesting sites for birds.

Ethnobotany

Its dense growth habit made it a natural for use in wind breaks of early settlers.

Native Distribution

Intermountain western United States from Wyoming and Montana in the north to Utah and Colorado.

Establishment

Little effort needed in establishment.

Growing Conditions and Culture

Mature Size 80'Hx35'Wx3'dbh
 USDA Zone 4-7
 Light Requirements Part to Full Sun

Soils Diverse
 Drought Tolerant? Moderate
 Inundation Tolerant? Moderate

Pests/Damaging Agents

Needle blights and spider mites are common. Spruce sawfly and aphids also common. These are not usually fatal though many require chemical control. Careful, chemicals dissolve needle wax.

Similar Species

Alberta spruce.

Propagation

Seed - cold stratify. Rarer varieties are grafted. Layering.

Source(s)

Transplants.