

Douglas Fir

Pseudotsuga menziesii

Douglas Fir is the quintessential evergreen tree of Oregon as well as its state tree. Growing in nearly pure stands in the coast range to heights of more than 200 feet, it is also plantation raised for sheared Christmas trees. The common name honors David Douglas, the Scottish botanist who first introduced the tree to cultivation in 1826. It is not a fir at all, nor a pine or a spruce. It is a distinct group of five species native to North America. A Native American legend explains that each of the three pointed bracts are a tail and two tiny legs of the mice who hid inside the scales of the cones during forest fires. Douglas Fir will grow in most soils save those that are wet. A small plantation of Douglas Fir is planted on Orion Farms for Christmas trees.



Identification

Leaves

Evergreen, alternate, spirally distributed needles. Needles are flat with a pointed tip. Bright green upper surface with single groove, paler beneath.



Flower/Fruit

Monoecious; inconspicuous red flower. Oval fruit 1-3", brown, seeds borne on single winged



Bark/Wood

Smooth, grey-brown with gummy resin blisters when young, becoming very thick with age and deeply grooved with dark reddish ridges.



Form

Tall, straight, symmetrical tree with dense cylindrical or conical shape.



Uses

Wood is used for structural applications in the construction industry. Douglas Fir is the most common sheared Christmas tree in the US.

Ethnobotany

Wood was widely used by Native Americans for spear shafts, poles, etc. The pitch was used for sealing as well as medicinal salves. White pitch used as sweetener. A tea beverage was made from the needles.

Native Distribution

As far north as British Columbia south to northern California. Subspecies into Mexico.

Establishment

Best established under light shade, but will transplant into full sun.

Growing Conditions and Culture

Mature Size 200'Hx60'Wx6'dbh
 USDA Zone 5-8
 Light Requirements Part to Full Sun

Soils Diverse
 Drought Tolerant? Moderate
 Inundation Tolerant? No

Pests/Damaging Agents

Aphid infestations on small trees are common. Scale and bark beetles may attack trees under stress. Leaf cast fungi can cause early needle drop.

Similar Species

Propagation

Seed - cold stratify.

Source(s)

Transplants from Benton County Soil & Water Conservation District.