

Picea pungens - Colorado Spruce (*Pinaceae*)

Picea pungens is a common pyramidal evergreen accent tree or large shrub that serves as a bold focal point in the landscape, especially among the silver or blue foliage types.

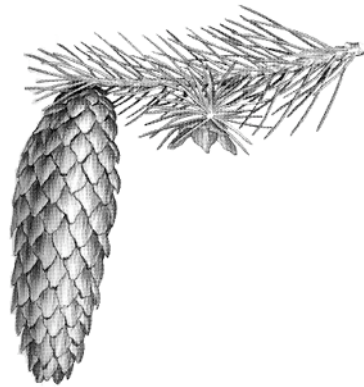
Form



-susceptible to several pests, of which spider mites are the worst, that cause an overall decline in the new growth during mid-summer, and to several diseases, of which needle cast and trunk canker are the most serious
-abundantly available, primarily in B&B form but increasingly in container form
-Blue Spruce is somewhat tolerant of winter salt spray, with green-foliaged forms being less tolerant (since they have less coating of needle wax) than blue or blue-silver forms

Foliage

-evergreen
-needles to 1" long
-often uniformly distributed around the stem and radiating straight outward from the stem for a stiff, prickly effect and therefore painful to grasp
-variants have bluish or silvery foliage that is vibrant when newly emerged



Flowers

-inconspicuous; monoecious

Fruits

-cones to 3" long, light green when immature, becoming brown with maturity

Twigs

-light brown with an orange cast
-needle scars raised on the stem

Trunk

-thick gray scales with age

Function

-specimen tree
-row or group plantings
-evergreen pyramidal focal point, especially in youth and especially with foliage color variants

FEATURES

-large evergreen specimen tree
-maturing at 50' tall x 20' wide as a general rule, but cultivars are often smaller
-upright pyramidal growth habit in youth and often maintaining this form through maturity, but sometimes with age becoming conical with the lower branches drooping
-slow growth rate

Culture

-full sun to partial sun
-tolerates many adverse conditions, including dry soils, soils of various pH, and winter salt spray

Texture

-bold texture
-thick density

Assets

-evergreen tree with a formal symmetrical pyramidal shape, especially in youth
-branches to the ground
-foliage variants are common and range from bluish to silvery foliage
-bold texture

Liabilities

-spruce spider mites will lead to a decline in both vigor and stress resistance of infested trees
-when a recent transplant is not regularly watered for at least the first year of root reestablishment, it can result in the death of the terminal leader, dieback of side branch tips, or death of the entire tree, even though established Blue Spruce are quite drought tolerant

Habitat

-Zones 2 to 7
-Native to Western U.S.

SELECTIONS

Alternates

-narrowleaf evergreen trees with a formal appearance and some blue shade of color (*Abies concolor* 'Candicans', *Picea omorika*, *Pinus flexilis* var. *glauca* 'Vanderwolf's Pyramid', *Pinus sylvestris* 'Watereri', etc.)
-pyramidal evergreen trees of green foliage (*Picea abies*, *Pinus strobus*, *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, etc.)

Cultivars - Variants - Related species

-many exist, selected for a combination of foliage color (green, green-blue, sky blue, silver-blue, etc.) and growth habit (normal pyramidal, wide pyramidal, columnar, weeping, prostrate, globed dwarf, open branching vs. layered branching vs. dense branching, etc.); a few of the most common are listed below:
-*Picea pungens* - in the nursery trade (when everything is correctly and fully labeled), this would be Green Colorado Spruce, which has a medium-green, green-gray, or green-blue shading of the foliage, being a mixture of seed-grown trees that display the genetic diversity of the species in terms of foliage color (so always look before you buy, and compare); to 50' x 20'

-*Picea pungens* f. *glauca* - Colorado Blue Spruce - a large, catchall grouping of foliage variants that are blue, bluish-green, or silvery-blue in color, prized for their alternative evergreen color in the landscape. Some cultivars:
- 'Bakeri' - the best upright pyramidal cultivar for use at the foundation of a house, to 12' x 6', with blue foliage
- 'Glauca Globosa' ('Globosa') - a true dwarf specimen shrub, commonly sold as a "low-graft" when 1' x 2', and slowly maturing to 3' x 5' while maintaining its flattop shape, but also sold as a grafted "standard" on a 1-4' "trunk"; very nice as a focal point accent
- 'Hoopsii' - perhaps the standard cultivar by which all other Blue Spruce are judged, maturing at about 40' x 15', having blue-white foliage, slightly irregular and open in growth habit in youth, but assuming the normal tight pyramidal growth habit by about 15 yrs. of age

