

Black Spruce

Picea mariana

Black spruce is a slow-growing, long-lived species that loves boggy or peaty soil. It's narrow, pyramid-shaped, and has small, egg-shaped cones. The wood is generally good for pulp, but the treetops have been used for Christmas trees. Twigs, shoots, and seeds are eaten by a variety of wildlife, and many bird species nest in the branches. Note that black spruce doesn't handle very hot weather well.

Height: 25' to 60', depending on the quality of the site.

Under favorable conditions, it can grow anywhere from 1 to several inches per year. Growth is faster if the tree has more sunlight.

Planting environment:

Soil: organic-rich, peaty soil, but can live in coarse, rocky soil too.

Soil moisture: Moist to wet.

Sunlight: Part shade to full sun (needs >4 hours of sun per day)

Black spruce can survive shade competition for a long time, but clear surrounding vegetation if you want faster-growing trees.

Plant seedlings 10'-15' apart.

Maintenance:

Black spruce trees don't require a lot of maintenance. Note that shallow roots make black spruce prone to wind throw. Monitor for dwarf mistletoe, which can be very deadly for a whole stand.

Top diseases/pests:

1. Dwarf mistletoe
2. Windthrow

