

## *Alnus glutinosa* 'Pyramidalis' 'Pyramidalis' Common Alder<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

A popular tree of moist to wet soils, common alder is a moderate to fast-growing (two feet per year) deciduous tree (Fig. 1). This upright, columnar cultivar to 20-foot spread and a 12 to 18-inch trunk but is capable of growing taller. The species is not native but has escaped from cultivation and will form pure stands or thickets in disturbed wet sites. The two to four-inch-wide, dark green, roundish leaves with toothed edges and pale undersides are joined in spring by rather insignificant male and female flowers. Foliage remains green well into the fall. It is the fruits which are most interesting, small, nutlike, one-inch "cones" which persist throughout the fall and winter, long after the darkening leaves have fallen. These fruits, along with the attractive, dark brown, furrowed bark, make alder an attractive landscape specimen throughout the winter. The fruits are food for a variety of wildlife.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Alnus glutinosa* 'Pyramidalis'

**Pronunciation:** AL-nus gloo-tih-N0-suh

**Common name(s):** 'Pyramidalis' Common Alder, 'Pyramidalis' Black Alder, 'Pyramidalis' European Alder

**Family:** *Betulaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 3 through 7 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** reclamation plant; screen; shade tree; specimen

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

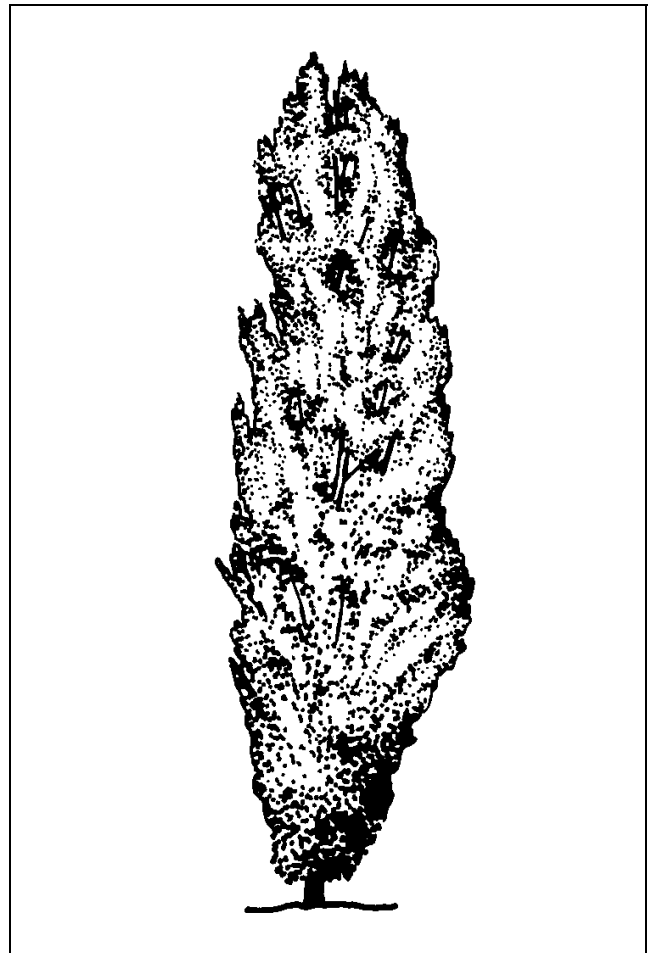


Figure 1. Mature 'Pyramidalis' Common Alder.

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-71, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 40 to 50 feet

**Spread:** 15 to 20 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

**Crown shape:** oval; pyramidal

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** coarse

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** double serrate; serrate

**Leaf shape:** orbiculate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** purple; red

**Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** elongated; oval

**Fruit length:** < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown; gray

**Current year twig thickness:** medium; thin

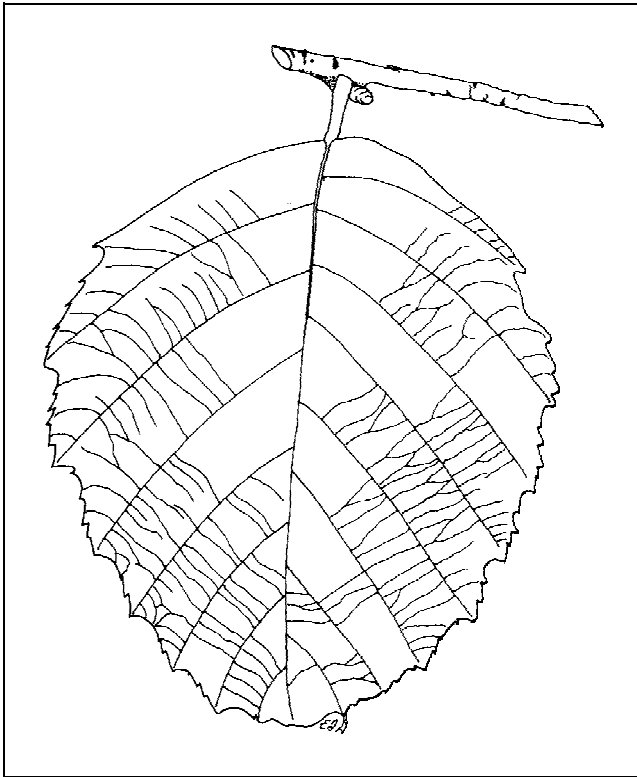


Figure 3. Foliage of 'Pyramidalis' Common Alder.

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun;  
tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline;  
extended flooding; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

### Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

**Outstanding tree:** tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

**Invasive potential:** No entries found.

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** not known to be susceptible

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## USE AND MANAGEMENT

A good plant for establishing along stream banks to stabilize soil and add interest, alder can also be used as a specimen in a more formal landscape where wet

soil challenges most other plants. The columnar growth habit makes it suited for a screen planted on 10-foot centers, and for areas with narrow overhead space. Some horticulturists believe that it could be used as a substitute for Lombardy Poplar. It requires little pruning to develop into a well-formed tree. Unfortunately, it is usually not grown in nurseries but nursery operators should be encouraged to grow this adaptable tree.

Common alder will grow easily in full sun or partial shade in almost any landscape setting since the trees are able to "fix" nitrogen, or take it out of the soil atmosphere, enabling these trees to grow in the poorest and wettest soils where other trees might fail. Alder will grow best in wet or moist soils, acid or alkaline, and have even been observed growing with roots submerged in water, but it is also tolerant of moderate drought, compaction, and urban stress. Common Alder transplants easily and will seed itself into an area creating a thicket if it is planted and left alone in an area which is not maintained. It remains to be seen whether this cultivar will do the same.

Other cultivars include: 'Aurea', golden yellow leaves; 'Laciniata' leaves not as deeply lobed, vigorous growth;

Propagation is by seed. Cultivars are grafted onto seedling root stock.

### Pests

Leaf miners, tent caterpillars. Tent caterpillars can cause significant defoliation but trees normally recover.

### Diseases

Powdery mildew and cankers but these are usually not serious.