



Pseudolarix kaempferi Golden Larch¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

INTRODUCTION

This large but graceful, uncommon deciduous conifer reaches 40 to 70 feet in height with a straight trunk and a spread of 20 to 40 feet (Fig. 1). Since it grows very slowly, it is usually not seen more than 30 to 40 feet tall. The silhouette is a rather open but symmetrical pyramidal shape with pendulous branch tips. The fine-textured needled foliage is 1.5 to 2 inches long and pale green above, blue/green below. The foliage turns a brilliant yellow in the fall for a short time but long enough to make a very striking landscape statement. The three-inch-long, upright cones are interspersed along the branches, and the reddish-brown bark is rugged and furrowed.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Pseudolarix kaempferi*
Pronunciation: soo-doe-LAIR-icks KEM-fer-eye
Common name(s): Golden Larch
Family: *Pinaceae*
USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 7 (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: Bonsai; specimen; no proven urban tolerance
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 40 to 70 feet
Spread: 20 to 40 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

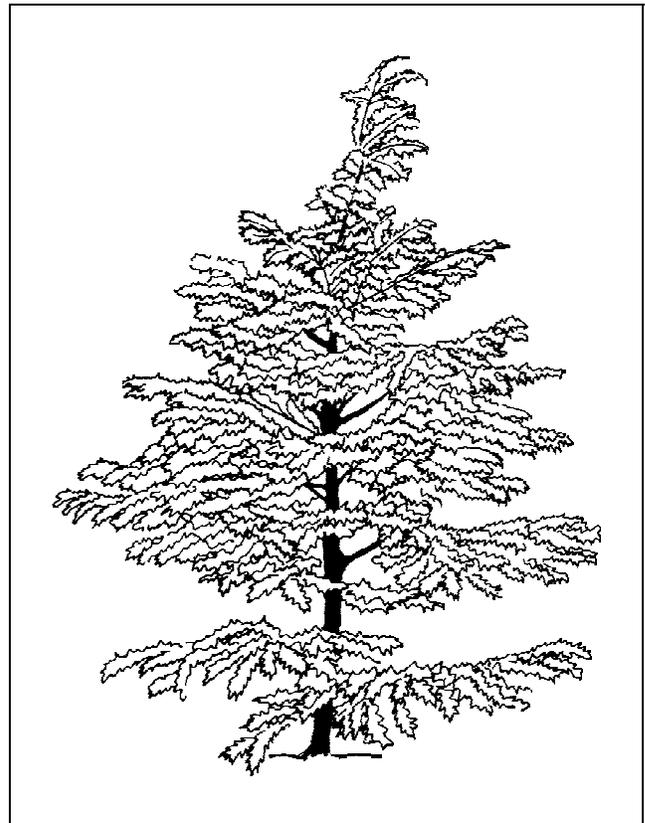


Figure 1. Young Golden Larch.

Crown shape: pyramidal
Crown density: open
Growth rate: slow
Texture: fine

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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.

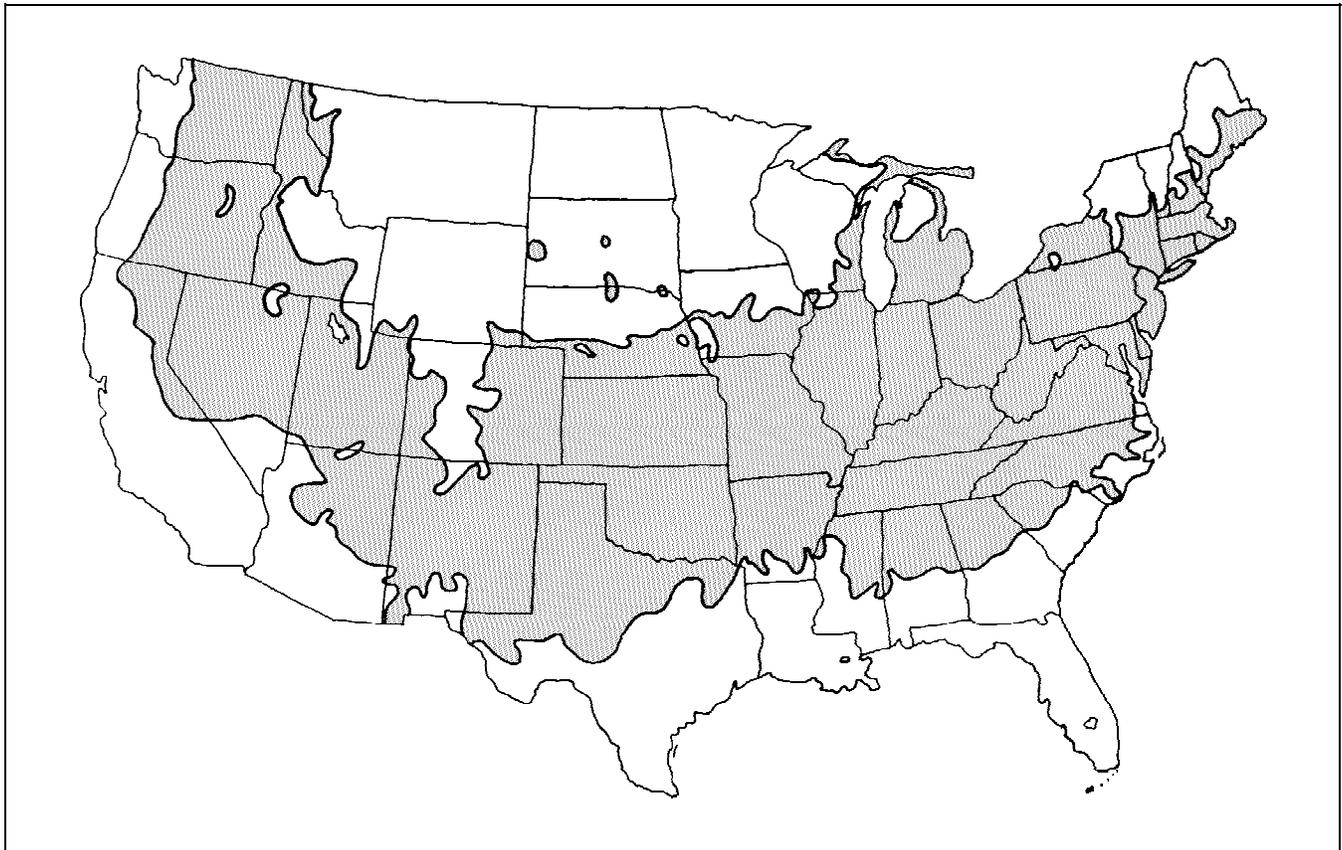


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: linear; needle-like (filiform)

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches; less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown; green

Current year twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

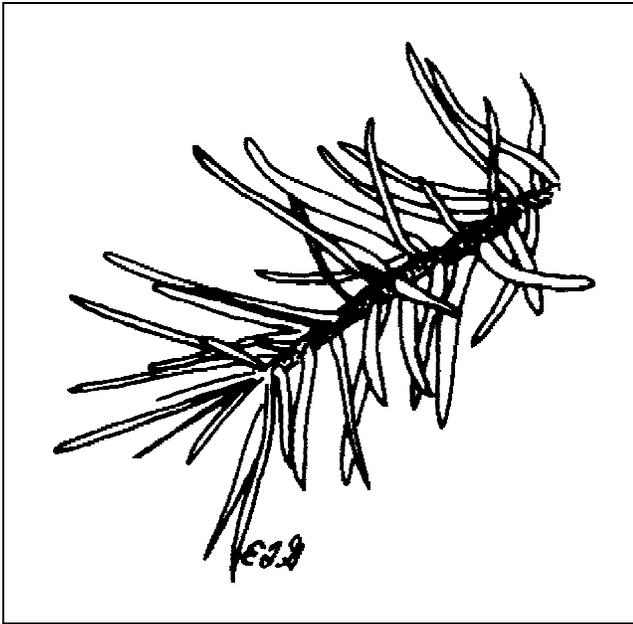


Figure 3. Foliage of Golden Larch.

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: little, if any, potential at this time

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible

Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

The attractive bark, strong pyramidal shape, and wide-spreading branches make Golden Larch particularly attractive in the winter landscape. Its slow growth and attractive form makes it a popular choice for containers and for use as a bonsai. It can be used in residential landscapes since it grows at a slow rate. Plant it in the open so the form can be fully appreciated. Locate it far enough from sidewalks and buildings so lower branches will not have to be pruned.

Golden Larch should be grown in full sun on deep, rich, well-drained, moist acid soil where the trees can be protected from harsh, cold winds. The trees should not be planted in limestone soils and they are not tolerant of clay unless located on a slope where drainage would be excellent.

The cultivar 'Nana' is a dwarf form. 'Annesleyana' is a dense, dwarf form with weeping branches.

Propagation is by seed, although it is difficult to obtain fertile seed.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.