



Picea omorika Serbian Spruce¹

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INTRODUCTION

A narrow, pyramidal silhouette with thin, graceful arching branches (Fig. 1). The trunk grows straight and the tree requires no pruning to keep the narrow, pyramidal form. The upper surface of the needles is glossy, dark green. The lower surface is marked with two white stomata lines. The plant will grow about 50 feet tall and spread 20 feet and is one of the most elegant Spruces.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Picea omorika*

Pronunciation: PIE-see-uh oh-more-EE-kuh

Common name(s): Serbian Spruce

Family: *Pinaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 7 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; screen; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 45 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: pyramidal

Crown density: moderate

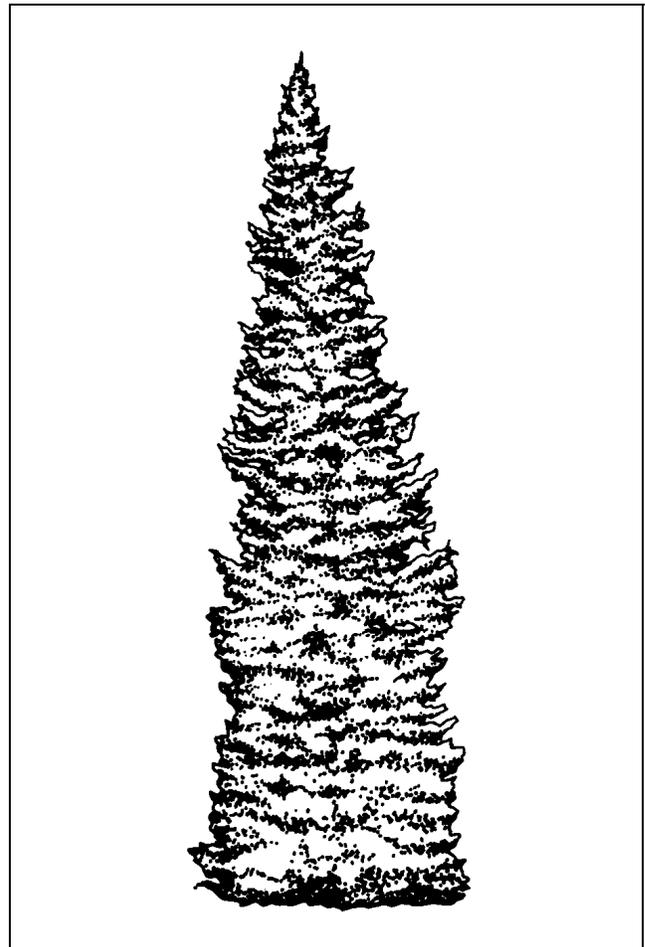


Figure 1. Mature Serbian Spruce.

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate; spiral (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: needle-like (filiform)

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen; needle leaf evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated; 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; persistent on the tree

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; not particularly showy; 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

Current year twig thickness: medium; thick

Culture

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

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: low

Soil salt tolerance: poor

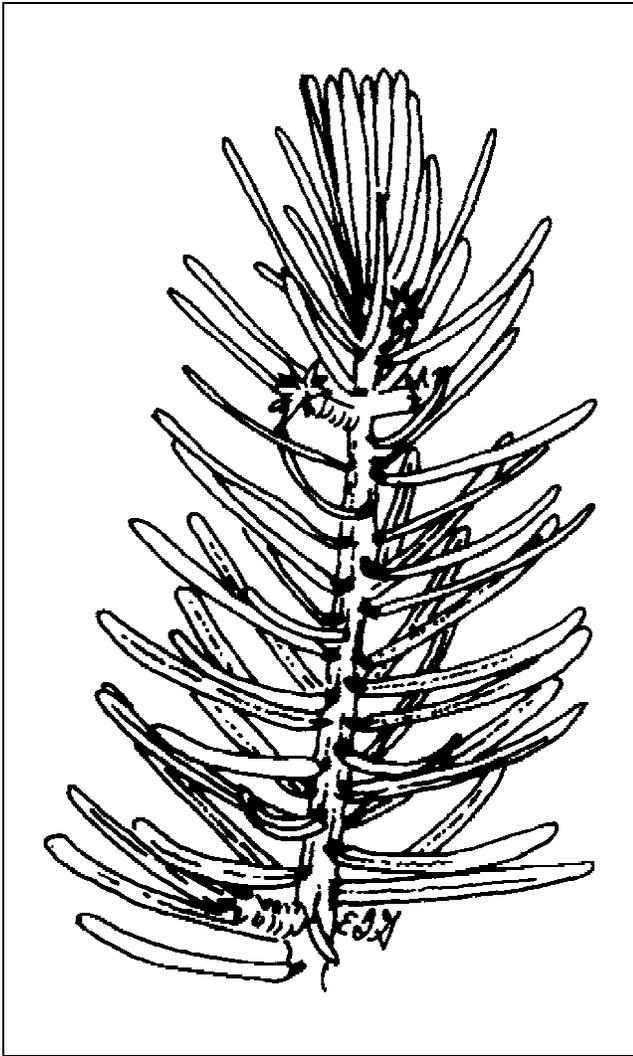


Figure 3. Foliage of Serbian Spruce.

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

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: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

This tree is best used as a specimen, wind break, screen, or perhaps as an evergreen street tree for narrow overhead spaces. It is surprisingly tolerant of urban conditions, probably more so than other Spruces. Grows best with some shelter from mid-day or

afternoon sun, though it tolerates full-day sun. Also tolerates soils with a high pH.

Pests

Bagworms make a sack by webbing needles and debris together. Small numbers may be picked off by hand or use *Bacillus thuringiensis*. Usually not serious.

In northern areas, Spruce budworm larvae feed on developing buds and young needles. The yellowish brown caterpillars are difficult to see.

The Spruce needle miner makes a small hole in the base of a needle then mines out the center. Dead needles are webbed together and can be found on infested twigs.

Spider mites can be problem in summer after hot dry weather. The small insects can't be readily seen with the naked eye. The first noticeable symptoms are yellowing of the oldest needles on infested branches. Close inspection with a magnifying glass will confirm the presence of the mites.

Sawfly larvae may feed on the needles. One infestation will usually not kill the tree.

Diseases

Spruce may be attacked by needle casts causing needles to turn yellow or brown and drop off. Another needle cast affects the lowest needles first then moves up the tree. Infected needles are a mottled yellow.

Several rust diseases attack Spruce but these are rarely seen. Infected needles turn yellow and drop off.