

Balsam Fir
Abies balsamea



Identification: A distinctive tree of the northern forest of central and eastern Canada because its regular crown gradually tapers to a spire-like top.

Leaves: needle-like, short, flat, resinous needles, 1 to 1.5cm long.

Flowers: male strobili about 3mm long at maturity, yellowish-red and tinged with purple. Female strobili about 2-3cm long at maturity and purplish, found singly or in small groups, confined to the top 2m of the crown.

Cones: cylindrical, perched upright on year-old branches in the crown.

Bark: grayish, smooth, with raised resin blisters when young; with age, breaking into irregular brownish scales.

Wood: light, soft, weak, somewhat brittle, odorless, white, little contrast between early wood and latewood, or heartwood and sapwood.

Distribution/Location: In Canada, balsam fir extends from Newfoundland and Labrador west through the more northerly portions of Quebec and Ontario, in scattered stands through north-central Manitoba and Saskatchewan to the Peace River Valley in northwestern Alberta, then south for approximately 640 km (400 mi) to central Alberta, and east and south to southern Manitoba.

Climate: Balsam fir grows best in the eastern part of its range in southeastern Canada. This area is characterized by cool temperatures and abundant moisture.

Habitat: Adaptable to a variety of soils and climate. It grows in pure stands or mixed with trembling aspen, white birch, white spruce and black spruce.

Growing Characteristics: Medium size trees, up to 25m high, 70cm in diameter, and 150 years old.

Reproduction: By seeds.

Uses: Modern - The resin is used to produce Canada balsam. Balsam fir is primarily used in the pulp and lumber industry. It is used extensively for Christmas trees in parts of the country.

Traditional - used as a cold remedy and as glue for glass and optical instrument components. The wood is used for paper manufacture and is also a popular Christmas tree.

Fun facts:

- ✚ Wildlife relies extensively on this tree for food and shelter.
- ✚ The fir tree has been a favorite Christmas tree for more than 400 years.





Distribution of the Balsam Fir in North America

<http://www.survivaltopics.com/survival/balsam-fir-pitch/>

Bibliography: *Trees in Canada* by John Laird Farrar pages 84-85

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