

TAMARACK (*Larix laricina*)



<p>A. Identification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leaves--needle-like, 3-sided and blue green turning bright yellow in autumn --from 2 years and older, the needles grow in clusters of 15-25 on short, woody projections which stay on the twig after the needles fall • fruit/cones--small, round seed cones are red at flowering and then brown with age --pollen cones are yellow • bark---thin, smooth and gray when young and later become reddish brown and scaly • wood--has yellowish-brown heartwood and somewhat whitish sapwood --annual growth rings are easy to see --in harsh weather conditions, the wood changes color over time and turns silvery grey --is coarse textured and is often spiral grained --is more or less oily and somewhat waxy to the touch
<p>B. Distribution / Location:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • occurs from northwest Canada to the east coast • in B.C. and the Yukon tamarack is not well represented and is found in only small stands • grows at sea level in the north and at higher elevation in the southern part of its range
<p>C. Climate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be found in many different climates • it shade intolerant and will only grow with ample sunlight and not under the canopy of other fast growing trees
<p>D. Habitat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • found on cold, wet, poorly drained soils such as sphagnum bogs, muskeg • often mixed with black and white spruce, trembling aspen, and white birch
<p>E. Growing characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • medium-sized trees up to 24 m high, 40 cm in diameter and up to 150 years old • trunk is slender, straight or sinuous, crown is narrowly conical and is open and irregular with age • main branches are horizontal and root systems are shallow and wide-spreading • in nutrient-poor bogs (near the tree line in the far north) the trees are stunted with short needles and narrow scales
<p>F. Reproduction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • both pollen cones and seed cones can be found on the tree (monoecious)

- pollen is developed in the yellow-colored male cone and transferred by wind to the female cone where fertilization and development takes place
- ripe seeds drop and if conditions are good the seeds will germinate
- bogs and muskeg are not good seedbeds unless there is a dry year

G. Uses:

- traditional--produce heavy, durable wood which is used for pulp, posts, and fuel
 - some native groups chewed tamarack resin to relieve indigestion
 - in the days of wooden sailing ships the tamarack roots were used to join the ribs to the deck timbers
- modern--it produces a heavy, durable wood used mainly for pulp, but also for posts, poles, and firewood

H. Fun facts:

- tamarack occurs in every province and territory of Canada
- is one of the fastest growing conifers when planted in well-drained soil
- comes from the Algonquin word “akemantak” meaning “wood used for snowshoes”
- has the strongest wood of all the conifers

Bibliography:

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<http://www.quebecwoodexport.com/eng/softwood/tamarack.htm>

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