

Tamarack

Larix laricina



Identification:

Leaves: needle-like, are three-sided and blue-green, turning bright yellow in autumn. The second year and older needles grow in clusters of 15 to 25 on short woody projections which remain on the twig after the needles fall. The first year needles appear as single needles on the stem.

Fruit/Cones: the small, round seed cones are red at flowering and turn brown with age. Pollen cones are yellow.

Bark: thin, smooth, gray when the young, becoming reddish-brown, scaly. Newly exposed bark is reddish-purple.

Wood: tamarack has yellowish-brown heartwood and somewhat whitish sapwood. Its annual growth rings are fairly easy to see and the transition from early wood to latewood is abrupt. Outside in harsher weather conditions, the wood changes colour over time and turns silvery grey. Tamarack wood is coarse-textured and often spiral-grained. The wood is more or less oily and somewhat waxy to the touch. It is the densest softwood in North America.

Distribution/Location: Tamarack occurs from northwestern Canada to the east coast. In British Columbia and the Yukon tamarack is not well represented and is only found in small stands. Tamarack grows at about sea level in the north, and at higher elevations in the southern part of its range.

Climate: Tamarack can be found in many different climates, as demonstrated by its large range. Tamarack is also shade intolerant, and will only grow with ample sunlight or in other words not under the canopy of other faster growing trees.

Habitat: Found mainly on cold, wet, poorly drained sites such as sphagnum bogs and muskeg; often mixed with black spruce. Grows better on moist, well-drained, light soils, mixed with black spruce, white spruce, trembling aspen and white birch.

Growing Characteristics: Medium- sized trees, up to 25m high, 40 cm diameter and 150 years old. The trunk is slender, straight or sinuous; the crown is narrowly conical, open, and becoming irregular with age. The principal branches are horizontal or sometimes ascending. Root systems are shallow, and wide-spreading. In nutrient-poor bogs, near the tree line in the far north the trees are often stunted with short needles and narrow cone scales.

Reproduction: Tamarack is a monoecious tree, meaning that both pollen cones and seed cones can be found on the same tree. Pollen is developed in the yellow-colored male cones and transferred via wind to the ovule cone where fertilization and embryo development takes place. Ripe seeds then drop and if site conditions are adequate seeds will germinate. Bogs and muskegs do not offer many good seedbeds except in drier years.

Uses: Traditional - Tamarack produces a heavy, durable wood used mainly for pulp but also for posts, poles, and fuel.

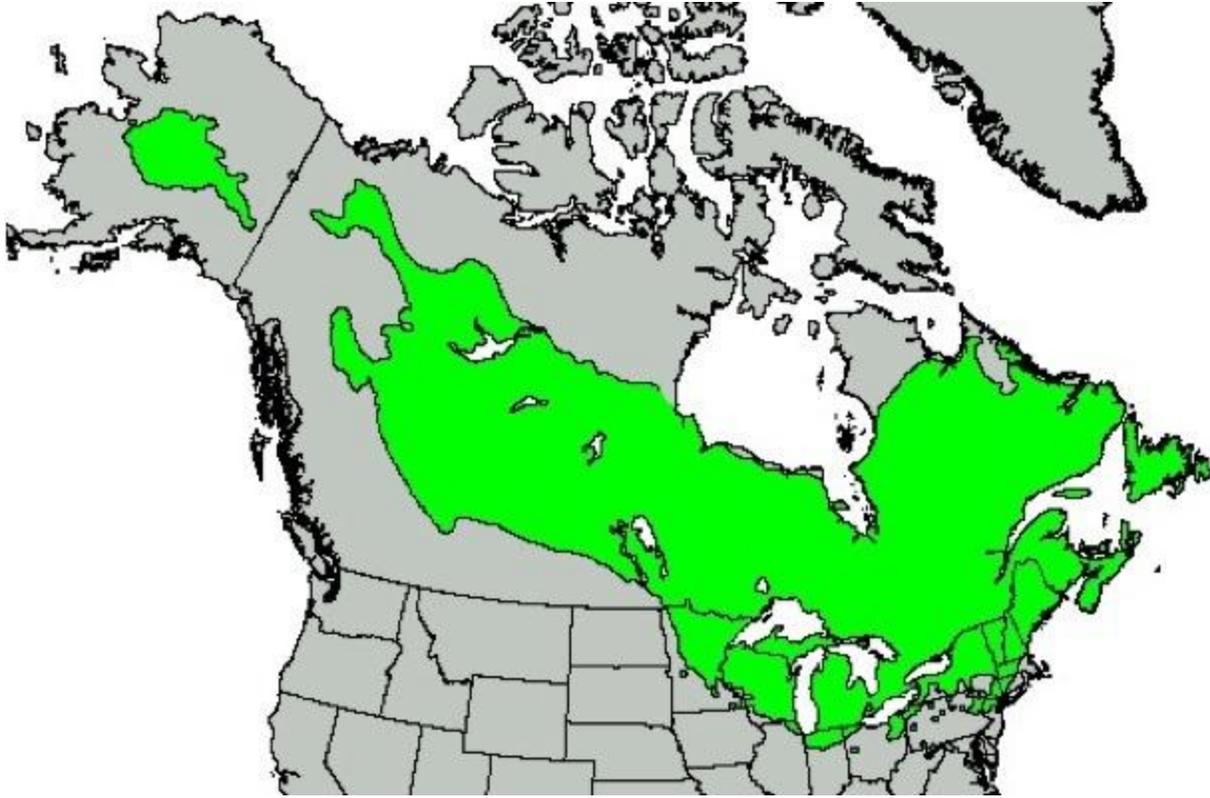
Some native groups chewed tamarack resin to relieve indigestion.

In the days of wooden sailing ships, tamarack roots were used to join the ribs to the deck timbers.

Modern – Tamarack produces a heavy, durable wood used mainly for pulp but also for posts, poles and firewood.







Tamarack growing range, North America

http://bioweb.uwlax.edu/bio203/2010/panich_just/Site/Habitat.html

Fun facts:

- ✚ Tamarack occurs in every province and territory of Canada.
- ✚ Tamarack is one of the fastest growing conifers when planted in well-drained soil.
- ✚ Tamarack comes from an Algonquin word, *akemantak*, meaning "wood used for snowshoes."
- ✚ Tamarack has the strongest wood of all the conifers.

Bibliography: *Trees in Canada* by John Laird Farrar page 74-75

<http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfd/library/documents/treebook/tamarack.htm>

<http://www.treesfortomorrow.com/seedling.htm> (just a picture, no information)

<http://forestry.about.com/library/tree/bltam.htm>

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

http://bioweb.uwlax.edu/bio203/2010/panich_just/Site/Reproduction.html

http://bioweb.uwlax.edu/bio203/2010/panich_just/Site/Habitat.html