

### *Picea abies*

[Synonyms : *Abies excelsa*, *Abies picea*, *Abies rubra*, *Chamaepicea fatrense*, *Picea abies* subsp. *acuminata*, *Picea abies* var. *arctica*, *Picea abies* subsp. *europaea*, *Picea abies* subsp. *fennica*, *Picea excelsa*, *Picea excelsa* var. *acuminata*, *Picea fennica*, *Picea montana*, *Picea obovata*, *Picea obovata* var. *fennica*, *Picea rubra*, *Picea vulgaris* var. *europaea*, *Pinus abies*, *Pinus abies* var. *fennica*, *Pinus excelsa*, *Pinus picea*]

**NORWAY SPRUCE** is an evergreen tree. Native to central and northern Europe it has needle-like leaves (spines) and oblong cylindrical, glossy brown cones.

It is also known as *Abeto rojo* (Spanish), *Aete rosso* (Italian), *Aiopiceo* (Esperanto), Christmas tree, Common spruce, *Épicéa* (French), *Épicéa commun* (French), *Euroopankuusi* (Finnish), *Europäische Fichte* (German), European spruce, *Fichte* (German), *Gemeine Fichte* (German), *Gran* (Swedish), Jura turpentine, *Kuusi* (Finnish), *Metsäkuusi* (Finnish), *Mlid* (Rumanian), Norway pine, Norwegian spruce, Pine, *Rødgran* (Danish, Swedish), *Rotfichte* (German), *Rottanne* (German), *Spriwsen Norwy* (Welsh), Spruce, Spruce fir, *Srek obyčajný* (Slovak), *Srk ztepilý* (Czech), *Vanlig gran* (Swedish), White deal, and White spruce.

‘Burgundy pitch’ or ‘white pitch’ is obtained by tapping the trunk and the pitch is distilled to make oil of turpentine.

*Abies* is derived from the genus name *Abies* meaning ‘like plants in that (fir) genus’.

This tree is believed to be able to survive for 1,000 years and is one of the oldest living trees today in central Europe.

In Britain Norway spruce is one of the species most commonly seen as the traditional Christmas tree. The custom originated in Germany and crossed the North Sea when Prince Albert (1819-1861) married Queen Victoria in 1840. Although the Germans associate the practice with a legend about the Christ child visiting some poor peasants (who He thanked for their hospitality by planting a piece of fir in the ground to give them a tree that would provide food and comfort each Winter), it is thought more likely to have developed from the Scandinavian Tree of Time. This was the Winter solstice equivalent of the May Pole and symbolized everlasting life and mystic fertility. The Jewish Festival of Light (Hanukkah) may also have contributed to the tradition as it is said by some to be responsible for the habit of decorating the fir tree with lights.

Apart from being the most commonly planted conifer in Europe and North America, Norway spruce also provides a staple raw material for the paper industry.

In North America the Mohican Indians used the sap to treat boils and abscesses.

Today young tips and twigs provide a commercial ingredient used in the manufacture of beer, and the bark is used for tanning leather. The wood known as ‘white deal’ is made into furniture and is also employed in the production of paper. Oil of turpentine is used by the pharmaceutical industry in making plasters and ointments.