

*Picea orientalis*

[Synonyms : *Pinus abies* var. *orientalis*, *Pinus orientalis*]

**ORIENTAL SPRUCE** is an evergreen tree. Native to north-eastern Turkey and the Caucasus it has needle-like leaves and hanging cylindrical, brown cones.

It is also known as Caucasian spruce, *Épicéa d'Orient* (French), *Kaukasische Spar* (German), *Kaukasus-Fichte* (German), *Orientalisk gran* (Danish, Swedish), *Orient-Fichte* (German), *Orientgran* (Swedish), *Piceo orienta* (Esperanto), *Smrek* (Slovak), and *Smrk východní* (Czech).

The bruised leaves emit a resinous aromatic fragrance.

*Orientalis* means 'of or from the East'.

The fibrous roots from oriental spruce have not only provided material for basket weaving but, of greater interest to many people, have long been prized as the basis of a much sought after spruce beer.

According to some authorities oriental spruce has been a source of local food. Inner bark has provided emergency rations which when dried and powdered has been added to bread mixtures or used as soup thickening. Raw or cooked round young male catkins have been used as food flavouring and the roasted centres of young cones have yielded a sweet syrup. Young shoots have been prepared as a refreshing tea.

Although the durable white wood has been used for construction and for making furniture, its primary value has been as a source of paper pulp.

Medicinally, local herbalists used the young shoots to treat colds and bronchitis and recommended adding the needles to bathwater for their therapeutic qualities. The tree's gum was not only used as a plaster to set bones but was also applied to cuts and wounds, as well as offering a protection against sunburn.