

Tsuga canadensis

[Synonyms : *Abies canadensis*, *Pinus canadensis*, *Tsuga americana*]

CANADA HEMLOCK is an evergreen tree. Native to eastern North America it has needle-like leaves and small brown cones.

It is also known as American hemlock, Black hemlock, Canada pitch, Canada-pitch tree, Canadian hemlock, Common hemlock, Eastern hemlock, Eastern hemlock-spruce, *Hemlock* (Swedish), Hemlock bark, Hemlock fir, Hemlock gum, Hemlock gum tree, Hemlock pitch, Hemlock pitch tree, Hemlock spruce, Hemlock tree, Huron pine, *Jedlovec kanadský* (Czech), *Jedlovec kanadský* (Slovak), *Kanadische Hemlocktanne* (German), New England hemlock, Pennsylvania hemlock, Pine, Pinus bark, Red hemlock, *Schierlingstanne* (German), Spruce, Spruce hemlock, Spruce pine, Tan-bark tree, *Tsuga kanadská* (Czech), Water hemlock, Water spruce, Weeping spruce, West Virginia hemlock, White hemlock, and Wisconsin white hemlock.

Warning – prolonged contact with the wood may cause dermatitis.

Canadensis means ‘of or from Canada or north-eastern North America’.

North American Indian tribes including the Iroquois, Micmac and Chippewa and in due timelumbermen made a tea-like drink from the leaves.

It was also used by Indian tribes for tanning, and they taught the process to the early settlers. The Menominee tribe boiled the bark to obtain a dark red colouring, and several other tribes including the Micmac, Cherokee, Malecite, and Chippewa also used it for dyeing. Inner bark provided the Cherokee tribe with basketry material, while the Chippewa Indians used the bark for making their wigwams. Some of the Chippewa tribe also burnt the bark as fuel in certain circumstances. (Apparently they found that when they were re-boiling pitch the use of Canada hemlock bark made it easier to control the temperature.) Chippewa hunters also discovered that a wash with the boiled bark would remove rust from their traps and (they claimed) keep them rust-free.

The Cherokee Indian tribe used the brittle, lightweight wood for construction and like the Micmac Indians they burnt it as fuel too.

Records suggest that the tree’s greatest value for North American tribes including the Malecite lay in its medicinal properties. Several tribes such as the Potawatomi, Chippewa, Micmac, Cherokee and Malecite Indians took it for diarrhoea, and the latter three also used it for treating kidney problems. While the Menominee and Iroquois tribes both chose it for causing sweating when this was needed, the Iroquois also valued it as a remedy for fever, cholera, blood diseases, tuberculosis and venereal diseases, and they also used it as a stimulant. Cherokee Indians and some of the Algonkin tribe used it to treat some female problems, and Micmac Indians employed it as a remedy for urinary ailments and scurvy. Both the Iroquois and Micmac tribes appreciated it as a cough remedy, and it was used to ease colds by the Menominee, Potawatomi, Iroquois, Malecite, some of the Algonkin and the Micmac tribes. Menominee Indians took an inner bark infusion to counter abdominal pain, and it offered a treatment for rheumatism for the Delaware, some of the Algonkin, the Iroquois and Abnaki Indians. Externally the Chippewa tribe used it to heal wounds, and the Menominee, Cherokee, some of the

Algonkin, the Abnaki, Malecite (both adults and babies) and Micmac tribes all applied it to various skin disorders.

Authorities note that both American and Canadian lumbermen have on occasion made a tea from the leaves in the same way that the local Indians did.

Canada hemlock is a state emblem of Pennsylvania in the United States, adopted there in 1931. This moderately hard wood has been used for paper pulp. Among some of those who work with wood Canada hemlock appears to have attracted an appalling name. Apparently the hardness of the grain can be so unpredictable and the wood can split and twist unexpectedly. Reservations aside the light brown wood has also been used (and still is) for construction, and for making boxes and cheap crates.

At the beginning of the 21st Century the bark is still being used for tanning leather

Medicinally, the bark is used to treat cystitis, colon inflammation, diarrhoea, vaginal discharge, rheumatism, croup and gingivitis, and as a gargle for laryngitis.