



December 2013

3-4m feathered Picea abies, complete with festive snow

Better known as 'the Christmas Tree', *Picea abies* is a large evergreen conifer native across parts of central and northern Europe.

It is the most commonly planted spruce across Europe and also widely used in Northern America and Canada where it has partially naturalised. It is one of the conifers which can tolerate warmer, humid summer weather.

Fast growing when young and slowing with maturity, the shoots and branches of *Picea abies* are covered in short sharp needles, quadrangular and dark green with white dotted lines, joined to the branches with a short woody 'peg'.

Both male and female flowers are produced on the same plant in Spring. The females once fertilised produce reddish-brown cones up to 15cm in length, the largest of any Spruce species, which hang below the stems.

Plant Profile

Name: *Picea abies*

Common Name: Norway Spruce

Family: Pinaceae

Height: 40-50m


Demands: Grows best on deep, moist, fertile soils. Drought can lead to dieback in the crown. Does not tolerate salt, pollution or calcareous sites.

Foliage: Short stiff needles surround the stems

Fruit: Red-brown cones ripen in Autumn



Short, spiky needles of Norway Spruce


Deepdale
 Every year the city of Oslo donates a large Norway Spruce to London, Edinburgh, New York and Washington DC to be placed in their central square. This gift symbolises their gratitude for help and aid received during the second World War.



Uses for Norway Spruce

Fresh shoot tips - used medicinally for syrup, teas, baths, inhalation and ointments. Can also be used to make spruce beer (which some may still consider medicinal)

Resin - Historically used for turpentine and pitch.

Cones - an important food source for red squirrels.

Wood - With a straight grain and easily workable, the woods can be used for furniture, musical instruments (particularly guitars), chipboard and paper. It absorbs preservatives well so can be also be used for external joinery, rafters, joists etc.



2-3m feathered Norway Spruce



Close up of needles



Norway Spruce clipped into balls



Semi-mature *Picea abies*, 5-6m height