



BLACK SPRUCE *Picea mariana* (P. Mill.) B. S. P.



In the past, spruce beer was made by boiling the branches of the black spruce.

Black spruce occurs statewide; it grows on cool upland soils, but is more commonly found along streams, on the borders of swamps and in sphagnum bogs. It is also often found on the sandy soils of eastern Maine. It can grow to a height of 50–70 feet and a diameter of 6–12 inches, but is normally smaller than the maximum size. On a good site, it will grow rapidly. In sphagnum bogs, trees 50–80 years old may be only 6–8 feet tall and about one inch in diameter. The branches are short, pendulous and have a tendency to curve up at the ends. It forms an open, irregular crown. The lower branches often touch the ground, and root to form new trees. This method of reproduction is known as “layering.”

The **bark** on the trunk is grayish-brown and the surface is broken into thin scales. The **leaves** are $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, dull blue-green, blunt-pointed, flexible and soft to the touch.





The **cones**, which usually stay on the trees for many years, are ½–1½ inches long, ovoid, and become nearly spherical when open. The cone scales are stiff and have toothed margins.

The **twigs** have many hairs, some of which are tipped with glands. The inner bark is olive-green.

The **wood** is soft and light, but strong. It is used for pulp, framing and construction lumber, and planking. Historically, spruce beer was made by boiling the branches.



Black spruce cones persist on the tree for many years. Look for clumps of old, gray, weathered cones high in the tree.



MAINE REGISTER OF BIG TREES 2008
Black Spruce Circumference: 47" Height: 66' Crown Spread: 20' Location: Camden

