

NATIVE CONIFERS OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

During the fall and winter months, seeds produced by cone-bearing trees form an important food source for a number of species of small birds and animals. Ten species of conifers are native to Prince Edward Island. Their cones are shown at right. How many can you identify? The answer key is found on page 14.

Eastern White Pine. This species was once one of the most prominent trees in the province. Because of its desirability for ships' masts and other construction purposes, original stands were harvested wholesale and now only scattered patches remain. These occur mainly in the south-eastern part of the province. Eastern white pine grows best on moist sandy soil. Cones mature in September and fall during the winter.

Red Pine. On P. E. I. red pine tends to be localized in three separate areas -- Murray River, Fort Augustus and New London. Best growth occurs on deep loamy sand or gravel soils. Cones mature and discharge their seeds in autumn and are shed the following year.

Jack Pine. Jack pine grows only in a few scattered locations on P. E. I., most notably the area around East Bideford. In this province it is confined mainly to low damp places, often associating with black spruce. Cones usually remain closed and stay on the tree.

Tamarack. Tamarack, or juniper as it is often called on P. E. I., grows throughout the Island. It chiefly occurs in boggy areas but is also found on some better drained sites. It is the only native coniferous tree that sheds its needles in the fall. Cones open in autumn but remain on the tree during the following winter and summer.

White Spruce. White spruce is found widely across the province, either as pure stands or growing with other species. It is the main species regenerating on old fields. In nature it thrives on well-drained, moist gravelly soil along streams and around the borders of swamps. Cones open in autumn and fall during the following winter and spring.

Black Spruce. This species grows throughout the province, mainly in low damp places. Cones are not shed from the tree but open at intervals during the winter to release seeds.

Red Spruce. Red spruce is found in scattered patches throughout the province. It grows on a wide variety of soil types but does best on well-drained loam in moist valleys. Cones open in autumn but generally are not shed until late the following summer.

Eastern Hemlock. This tree was once one of the predominant species in the province but now exists mainly in localized sites along the steep slopes of stream valleys. Seeds are shed during winter but cones remain on the tree until the following spring.

Balsam Fir. After the spruces, balsam fir is our most common coniferous species. It grows on a variety of sites but does best on moist, well-drained loam.

Eastern White Cedar. This species is found in scattered patches in the western part of the province, most often in wet swampy places. Cones ripen in late summer and are dropped the following year.

- BY WINIFRED CAIRNS (reprinted from
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