

# Norway Spruce – The Weeping Spruce

**By: Pam Bergstrom, Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District Forester**

Looking for a fast growing, large spruce tree for your windbreak? Look no further than the Norway Spruce. This European Native is a larger, very graceful spruce that is utilized in windbreaks and also in park or yard settings.

Norway Spruce is best planted in full sun and in well drained soils, avoiding overly sandy sites. Unlike the Black Hills Spruce, Norway Spruce is not drought tolerant and is moderately tolerant of road salt so keep that in mind when planting near roadways. And, compared to the Black Hills Spruce and Colorado Blue Spruce, it is the fastest growing spruce with an average growth rate of 6 – 18 inches a year.

Norway Spruce has also been called the weeping spruce because as the tree gets older, the branches do a weeping mimicry as the branches grow longer and get heavier. With the long branches, the Norway Spruce will get anyway from 30 – 60 feet wide and reach a height of 60-70 feet tall. You will find that they get taller and wider when they are planted by themselves out in a park setting or a yard.

So, how about wildlife benefits? Song birds love to build their nests in the branches and some species will eat the seeds found within the cones of the spruce. Some mammals will also eat the seeds and utilize hollowed trees for habitat.

Now, there are a few disease problems such as cytospora canker that can be controlled by cutting out the infected branches and rhizosphaera needle cast that can occur in wet years and can be controlled with copper-based fungicide applications. With pest/insect problems, spider mites and bagworms can be a problem as well, but they can be controlled with insecticide applications. Wildlife can be a problem, especially when the tree is young because rabbits can girdle the tree and deer will chow down on the new growth and this can stunt the growth of the tree.

Norway Spruce is also planted not only for windbreaks or yard trees, but also to be harvested as Christmas Trees. Did you know that Oslo, Norway sends Norway Spruces to London, Edinburgh, and Washington D.C. each year to be used for Christmas Trees? This is a tradition that has taken place for over 100 years.

Also, the Norway Spruce is also utilized for its timber property and for paper production. The timber can be used as tonewood that is made into instruments such as violins and other stringed instruments. In some counties within Europe, the new shoots that appear in the spring will be harvested and utilized into a tea or another medicinal format to help with Vitamin C deficiencies, respiratory illnesses, digestive illnesses, skin problems, and infections. Norway Spruce new growth tips are also put in warm water/bathes for relaxing and soothing joints.

We know the Norway Spruce needs room to grow, but it is also a long lived tree. Reaching an average age of 125 years of age, some specimens have been estimated to be 350 years or older. This tree is in it for the long term and this is the reason it makes a great windbreak tree and yard tree.

In closing, when thinking about the next evergreen tree for your windbreak, yard, or even memorial tree, Norway Spruce is a fast growing, sun loving, and long lived evergreen that is sometimes over looked and though it has a few disease and insect problems, is a solid choice for anyone who is planting in soils ranging from clay to loam and stay away from sites that are pure sand. Even though this European native will grow to be a tall and wide beauty, it is a great addition for a windbreak or a large yard.



Norway Spruce at Morton Arboretum in Chicago, Illinois.



An up-close look at the cone, the seed, and the needles of a Norway Spruce. [www.norwayspruce.com](http://www.norwayspruce.com)