

Colorado Spruce

Picea pungens var. *glauca*

Alex X. Niemiera, Associate Professor, Department of Horticulture

Summary:

Foliage: About 1 inch long sharp needles; evergreen

Height: About 50 feet

Spread: About 25 feet

Shape: Conical

Main features: Colorado spruce is usually a dense conical conifer. Within the species there is a botanical variety called the Glauca Group (var. *glauca*). The foliage of seedlings from plants in the Glauca Group can vary from green to bright powder blue. There are many cultivars with blue foliage that vary in the intensity of blue color. Cultivars also offer a range of sizes, forms, compactness, and growth rates. This species is quite tolerant of drought and poor soils. Due to the striking quality of the blue foliage, cultivars are quite attention-grabbing and easily serve as focal points in the landscape.

Plant Needs:

Zone: 3 to 7

Light: Full sun

Moisture: Average to dry

Soil type: Most soils except those that are poorly drained

pH range: Acid to alkaline

Functions:

Due to the striking quality of the blue foliage, cultivars are quite attention-grabbing and easily serve as focal points in the landscape. Colorado spruce can also be used in groupings and as a border. One might want to use restraint when using blue foliated cultivars, since too many may be distracting in a typical home setting. I have seen entryways, distant from the residence, that were lined with blue foliage cultivars that looked quite good.

Care:

No special care if needed for this species. Needles are quite sharp so do not plant this species where human-to-plant contact is likely.

Additional Information:

There are many fine cultivars with blue foliage that vary in the intensity of blue color. Cultivars also offer a range of sizes, forms, compactness, and growth rates. Here are few of the notable cultivars:

'Fat Albert' dwarf compact form with good blue foliage color

'Glauca Globosa' globe-shaped to broad conical dwarf form with good blue foliage; apparently there are more than one clones being sold under this name

'Glauca Pendula' perhaps the same as 'Glauca Procumbens' and 'Glauca Prostrata'; ground cover form; plants will occasionally send up a vertical shoot which needs to be pruned off to keep from forming an upright plant

'Hoopsii' one of the brightest light blue foliated cultivars

'Montgomery' dwarf wide conical form with very blue foliage

'Thomsen' also listed as 'Thompsen' and 'Thompsenii' one of the brightest light blue foliated cultivars