**Picea omorika**
Serbian Spruce

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

**INTRODUCTION**

A narrow, pyramidal silhouette with thin, graceful arching branches (Fig. 1). The trunk grows straight and the tree requires no pruning to keep the narrow, pyramidal form. The upper surface of the needles is glossy, dark green. The lower surface is marked with two white stomata lines. The plant will grow about 50 feet tall and spread 20 feet and is one of the most elegant Spruces.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Scientific name:** *Picea omorika*
**Pronunciation:** PIE-see-uh oh-more-EE-kuh
**Common name(s):** Serbian Spruce
**Family:** Pinaceae
**USDA hardiness zones:** 4 through 7 (Fig. 2)
**Origin:** not native to North America
**Uses:** wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; screen; specimen; no proven urban tolerance
**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

**DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 45 to 50 feet
**Spread:** 15 to 20 feet
**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms
**Crown shape:** pyramidal
**Crown density:** moderate

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Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate; spiral (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: needle-like (filiform)
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen; needle leaf evergreen
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: brown
Current year twig thickness: medium; thick

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: moderate
Aerosol salt tolerance: low
Soil salt tolerance: poor
Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

This tree is best used as a specimen, wind break, screen, or perhaps as an evergreen street tree for narrow overhead spaces. It is surprisingly tolerant of urban conditions, probably more so than other Spruces. Grows best with some shelter from mid-day or afternoon sun, though it tolerates full-day sun. Also tolerates soils with a high pH.

Pests

Bagworms make a sack by webbing needles and debris together. Small numbers may be picked off by hand or use Bacillus thuringiensis. Usually not serious.

In northern areas, Spruce budworm larvae feed on developing buds and young needles. The yellowish brown caterpillars are difficult to see.

The Spruce needle miner makes a small hole in the base of a needle then mines out the center. Dead needles are webbed together and can be found on infested twigs.

Spider mites can be problem in summer after hot dry weather. The small insects can’t be readily seen with the naked eye. The first noticeable symptoms are yellowing of the oldest needles on infested branches. Close inspection with a magnifying glass will confirm the presence of the mites.

Sawfly larvae may feed on the needles. One infestation will usually not kill the tree.

Diseases

Spruce may be attacked by needle casts causing needles to turn yellow or brown and drop off. Another needle cast affects the lowest needles first then moves up the tree. Infected needles are a mottled yellow.

Several rust diseases attack Spruce but these are rarely seen. Infected needles turn yellow and drop off.