

Picea omorika

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Kingdom: Plantae
Division: Pinophyta
Class: Pinopsida
Order: Pinales
Family: Pinaceae
Genus: *Picea*
Species: *P. omorika*

***Picea omorika* (Serbian Spruce)** is a rare, local spruce, endemic to the Drina River valley in western Serbia and eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina near Višegrad. It was originally discovered near the village of Zaovine on the Tara Mountain in 1875, and named by the Serbian botanist Josif Pančić; the epithet *omorika* is simply the Serbian word for "spruce"; hence, the scientific name means "Spruce-spruce".



It is a medium-sized evergreen tree growing to 20–35 m tall, exceptionally to 40 m tall, and with a trunk diameter of up to 1 m. The shoots are buff-brown, and densely pubescent (hairy). The leaves are needle-like, 10–20 mm long, flattened in cross-section, and dark blue-green above, and blue-white below. The cones are 4–7 cm long, fusiform (spindle-shaped, broadest in the middle), dark purple (almost black) when young, maturing dark brown 5–7 months after pollination, and have stiff scales.

Cultivation and uses

Outside of its native range, Serbian Spruce is of major importance in horticulture as an ornamental tree in large gardens, valued in northern Europe and North America for its very attractive crown form and ability to grow on a wide range of soils, including alkaline, clay, acid and sandy soil, although it prefers moist, drained loam. It is also grown to a small extent in forestry for christmas trees, timber and paper production, particularly in northern Europe, though its slow growth makes it less important than Sitka Spruce or Norway Spruce. In cultivation, it has produced hybrids with the closely related Black Spruce and also with Sitka Spruce.

Because of its limited range, it is not a major source of nutrition to wildlife, but does provide cover for birds and small mammals. Prior to the Pleistocene ice ages, it had a much larger range throughout most of Europe.

