



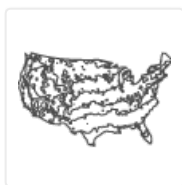
# Douglasfir

*Pseudotsuga menziesii*



Botanist-explorer David Douglas—this tree’s namesake—described it as “one of the most striking and truly graceful objects in nature.” Tree expert Michael Dirr heralded it as “one of the noblest forest trees.” To say the Douglasfir is beloved by the tree people of the world is definitely accurate.

The general public has a number of reasons to appreciate this tree as well. Douglasfir is one of the nation’s most important lumber species, it makes up nearly half of all Christmas trees grown in the U.S., and its attractive appearance and growth rate make it popular in yards and parks.



## Hardiness Zones

The douglasfir can be expected to grow in Hardiness Zones 4–6. [View Map](#)



## Tree Type

This is an evergreen tree, keeping its foliage year-round.

## Mature Size

The Douglasfir grows to a height of 40–70' and a spread of 12–20' at maturity.



### Growth Rate

This tree grows at a medium rate, with height increases of 13–24" per year.



### Sun Preference

Full sun and partial shade are best for this tree, meaning it prefers a minimum of four hours of direct, unfiltered sunlight each day.



### Soil Preference

The Douglasfir prefers acidic or neutral soil that is well-drained, though it can also be found in its native habitat of rocky mountain slopes. It is sensitive to drought.

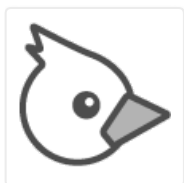


### Attributes

This tree:

- Features needles that are spiral, simple and roughly 1½" in length. The coloring of the needles depends on the variety: Coast Douglasfir has dark yellow-green (occasionally bluish-green needles); Rocky Mountain Douglasfir has bluish-green (occasionally yellow-green) needles.
- Yields light brown, 3–4" cones which hang downward on the branches with distinctive 3-pointed bracts protruding from between the scales.
- Is a popular Christmas tree choice because of the nice shape and soft, short needles that do not easily fall off.

- Grows in a pyramidal shape.
- Can be injured by high winds.
- Makes an excellent specimen, grouping or mass.



### Wildlife Value

Douglasfir seeds are used by blue grouse, songbirds, squirrels, rabbits and other small animals. Antelope, deer, elk, mountain goats and mountain sheep eat the twigs and foliage. It provides excellent cover for a wide range of animals.



### History/Lore

While the Douglasfir may have first been introduced to cultivation by botanist-explorer David Douglas in 1826, its importance to American history continues unabated. As well as being the country's top source of lumber today, the Douglasfir also helped settle the West, providing railroad ties and telephone/telegraph poles. The Douglasfir was crucial to American soldiers in World War II as well, being used for everything from GIs' foot lockers to portable huts and even the rails of stretchers that carried many a soldier from battle. But perhaps one contribution of the Douglasfir symbolizes its place in America's evolving history more than any other. When in 1925 the time came to restore the masts of "Old Ironsides," the USS Constitution, sufficiently grand White Pine trees could no longer be found. Today, Old Ironsides proudly sails in the Boston Navy Yard under the power of three Douglasfir masts.

There are two geographical varieties of Douglasfir: the Coast Douglasfir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* var. *menziesii*) native to British Columbia along the Pacific coast to central California and western Nevada and the Rocky Mountain Douglasfir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* var. *glauca*) native to the inland mountains of the Pacific Northwest and the Rocky Mountains from central British Columbia south to northern and central Mexico. The Coastal variety is faster growing, long-lived, and can reach over 300' tall. The needles are usually a dark yellow-green, although some trees they may be bluish green. Rocky Mountain Douglasfir is hardier, slower growing, shorter-lived and seldom grows over 130' tall. The needles are shorter and bluish green, although in

Douglasfir is written as one word or hyphenated to indicate that it is not a true fir. It is the state tree of Oregon.