

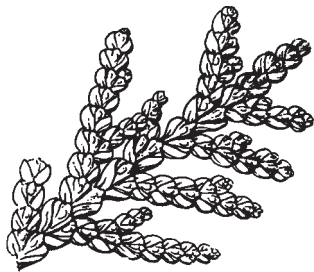


# Identification of Conifer Trees in Iowa

This publication is designed to help identify the most common trees found in Iowa. It is based on vegetative characteristics including leaves, fruit, and bark. It is neither complete nor without possible oversights.

Separate species are grouped by similar characteristics, mainly based on type and arrangement of leaves. These groups are; awl- or scale-like needles; single needles, flattened with rounded tips; single needles, square in cross section, with pointed tips; and needles in bundles or fasticles of two or more. Remember, vegetative characteristics are quite variable; use more than one specimen for comparison.

## Awl- or scale-like needles



*Thuja occidentalis*  
**Northern White Cedar**

Leaves are flattened and only of the scale type; cones have 4-6 scales; foliage is light green.



*Juniperus virginiana*  
**Eastern Red Cedar**

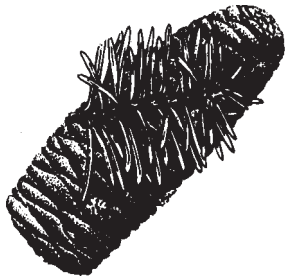
Leaves are dark green; leaves are both awl- and scale-like; cone is dark blue and berry-like.



*Juniperus communis*  
**Common Juniper**

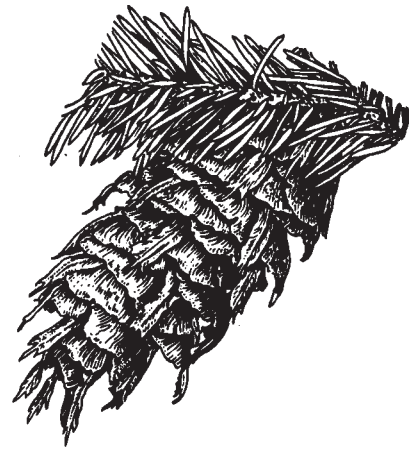
Leaves are awl shaped; cone is dark blue and berry-like.

**Single needles,  
flattened with  
rounded tips**



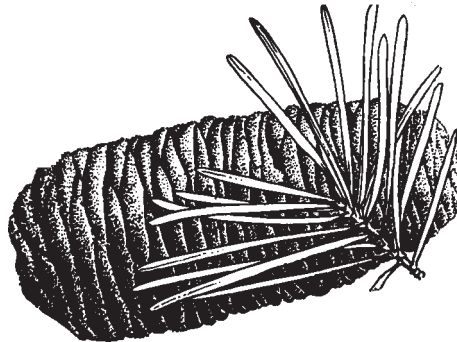
*Pseudotsuga menziesii*  
**Douglas Fir**

Needles occur on raised pegs;  
3/4-1 1/4 inches in length; cones  
have 3-pointed bracts between  
the cone scales.



*Abies balsamea*  
**Balsam Fir**

Needles are blunt and notched at  
the tip; 3/4-1 1/2 inches in length.



*Abies concolor*  
**White (Concolor) Fir**

Needles are somewhat pointed,  
curved towards the branch top  
and 1 1/2-3 inches in length; silver  
green in color.

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**Single needles,  
square in cross  
section, with  
pointed tips**

*Picea pungens*  
**Colorado Blue Spruce**

Needles are 1-1 1/4 inches long;  
blue green in color; very sharp  
cone is 2 1/2-4 1/2 inches long.



*Picea abies*  
**Norway Spruce**

Needles are 1/2-1 inch long;  
needles are dark green; foliage  
appears to droop or weep; cone  
is 4-7 inches long.



*Picea glauca*  
**White Spruce**

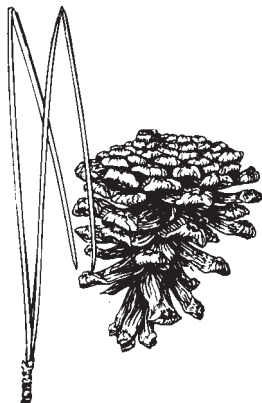
Needles are 1/2-3/4 inch long;  
needles are dark green with a  
whitish tint; cone is 1-2 inches  
long.



*Pinus resinosa*

**Red Pine**

Needles in bundles of two, 4-6 inches long. Needles are thin and brittle; snap when bent.

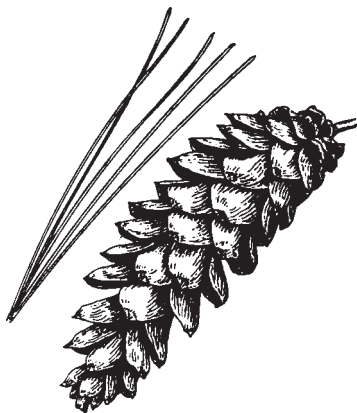


**Needles in bundles  
or fasticles of  
two or more**

*Pinus strobus*

**White Pine**

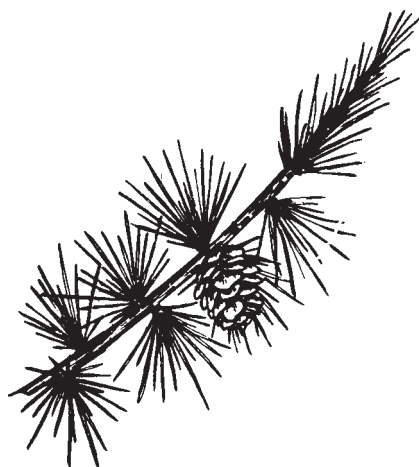
Needles in bundles of five; 2-4 inches long.



*Larix sp.*

**Larches or Tamaracks**

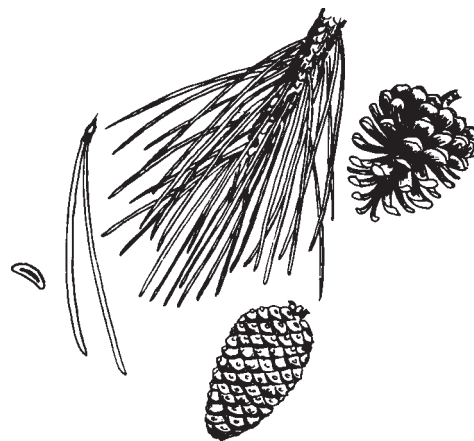
Many needles (7-24) per fasticle occurring on spur-like shoots; needles fall in autumn.



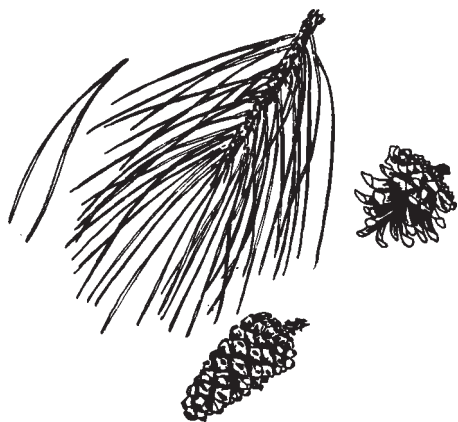
*Pinus nigra*

**Austrian Pine**

Needles in bundles of two, 4-6 inches long; needles are thick and stiff, folding when bent.

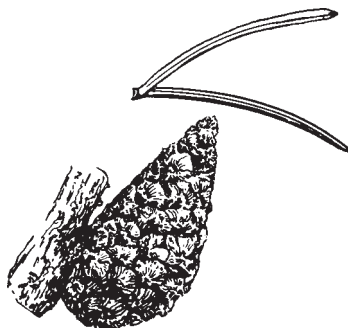


## Needles in bundles or fasticles of two or more (continued)



### *Pinus sylvestris* Scotch Pine

Needles in bundles of two,  
1 1/2-3 inches long and twisted;  
bark on older trees is orange and  
scaly.



### *Pinus banksiana* Jack Pine

Needles in bundles of two,  
3/4-1 1/2 inches long, twisted;  
cone tips curve toward the  
branch tips.



### *Pinus ponderosa* Ponderosa Pine

Needles in bundles of twos and  
threes, 5-8 inches in length.

Prepared by Paul H. Wray, extension  
forester.

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