

UK Christmas Tree Varieties / Types

From www.PickYourOwnChristmasTree.org.uk

In general, the Noble Fir, Nordmann Fir and Lodge Pole Pine are low needle drop trees and the Norway Spruce (the traditional tree) loses needles more quickly than the others in a hot room.

Selection Guide to the Most Common Christmas Tree Varieties in the UK

Ratings: 5= best, 4= very good, 3= average, 2= fair, 1= worst

	Firs			Pine		Spruces		
	Nordmann	Noble	Fraser	Lodgepole	White	White	Norway	Blue
Needle Holding (without water)	5	5	5	5	5	3	1	4
Needle Holding (with water)	5	5	5	5	5	4	2	5
Firmness Branches	2	3	3	5	2	4	3	5
Fragrance	5	5	4	3	4	1	3	3
Needle softness	5	5	5	2	5	3	3	3
Cost	2	3	3	5	4	3	2	1

* **Fir & Pine** needles generally cling onto branches tightly even after boughs have become dry.

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Firs

Nordmann Fir

By far, the most popular variety of Christmas tree in the United Kingdom, it is an excellent needle retaining species with soft glossy dark green needles. Nordmann Firs originate from the Caucasus mountains in Georgia, southern Russia and have seen a steady rise in popularity over recent years.

They are a non needle-drop variety with a darker green coloured foliage and slightly more rounded needles.

An excellent needle retaining species with soft glossy dark green needles. Nordmann (sometimes spelt "Nordman") Fir is probably the most popular Christmas tree in this country, one of the reasons being that it has a lovely symmetrical shape with strong branches. The needles are shiny, mid green and soft to touch.

Nordmann Firs are the preferred Christmas tree on the continent, with long, full, lush, dark green foliage, similar to a Fraser fir, but softer to the touch and with excellent needle retention. The Nordmann Fir Christmas Trees can reach 60 feet in height with a spread of 25 to 30 feet.

Their soft and lustrous black-green needles stem from symmetrically arranged branches, producing the ideal pyramidal specimen for a Christmas tree. Nordmann Firs are also popular as ornamental trees in parks and gardens.

See the photo at right.



Nordmann Fir



Nordmann Fir Needles

Balsam Fir

Balsam Firs are rare in the UK, only sold in a handful of tree farms in Essex and Leicestershire.

Needles are 3/4" to 1 and 1/2" short, flat, long lasting that are rounded at the tip. The needles are a nice, dark green colour with silvery cast and fragrant.

These needles last a very long time. This is the traditional American Christmas tree.

This tree has a dark-green appearance and retains its pleasing fragrance throughout the Christmas season. Named for the balsam or resin found in blisters on bark. Resin is used

to make microscope slides and was sold like chewing gum; used to treat wounds in the U.S. Civil War in the 1860's.



Balsam Fir needles



Balsam Fir

Canaan Fir

Similar to the other fir trees, Canaan Fir has short, soft needles that are dark green on the upper surface and silvery blue on the underside.

It combines the strong fragrance of the Balsam Fir with the better needle retention of the Fraser Fir.

It is native to isolated pockets in the eastern U.S. mountains of West Virginia

and Virginia, but is commercially grown in many areas of the U.K..



Canaan Fir needles



Canaan Fir

Douglas Fir

Douglas Firs have a good fragrance; holds blue to dark green; 1" to 1 and 1/2" needles. The needles have one of the best aromas among Christmas trees when crushed.

The Douglas fir needles radiate in all directions from the branch. When crushed, these needles have a sweet fragrance.

They are one of the top major Christmas tree species in the U.S. Named after David Douglas who studied the tree in the 1800's. The trees have a naturally good conical shape and can live for a thousand years.



Douglas Fir needles

Fraser Fir

Fraser Firs (sometimes misspelled Frazer Firs) have dark green, flattened needles; 1/2 to 1 inch long, dark green on the top and silvery underneath;

The tree has good needle retention; nice scent; pyramid-shaped strong branches which turn upward. The Fraser fir branches turn slightly upward. They have good form and needle-retention.

The dark blue-green needles have a pleasant scent, and excellent shipping characteristics as well.

The tree is named for a botanist, John Fraser, who explored the southern United States Appalachian mountains in the late 1700's.



Fraser Fir Needles



Douglas Fir



Fraser Fir

Grand Fir

Grand Fir trees are not yet common in the UK, but can be found in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. They have shiny, dark green needles about 1" - 1 and 1/2" long; the blunt needles when crushed, give off a citrusy smell. They are a yellowish-green on top surface with white bands on underside. The needles alternate in two lengths (on each tree) alternating longer and shorter which gives the branches a fuller look. Unlike the Douglas fir, Grand Fir needles are aligned in the same plane coming off the branch. Grand Firs commonly grow only on the U.S. Pacific northwest coast. The Grand Fir is related to the white fir, and is also called the great silver fir, western white fir, Vancouver fir, or Oregon fir. It mostly grows at altitudes from sea level to 1,800 m.



Grand Fir

Korean Fir

This is a new variety to the UK. It has silvery underside needles and a fresh pine smell. The needles curl in a unique way, displaying both green and white-silver colours that is quite striking in appearance. The appearance is similar to the Norway Spruce and the Nordmann, with a distinctive smell. Korean Spruce are better at keeping their needles than the Norway Spruce (it still needs to be watered every day) with that special fresh pine smell that fills the room.



Korean Fir needles



Grand Fir



Korean Fir

Noble Fir

Noble's have one inch long, bluish-green needles with a silvery appearance; has short, stiff branches; great for heavier ornaments; keeps well.

These needles turn upward, exposing the lower branches. It's extremely aromatic, and while it is native to the West Coast of the U.S., it is popular throughout the U.K. Its shape is similar to a Douglas fir but with a deeper, richer green.

Known for its beauty, the noble fir has a long keeping ability, and its stiff branches make it a good tree for heavy ornaments, as well as providing excellent greenery for wreaths and garland.



Noble Fir needles



Noble Fir

White Fir or Concolour Fir -

White Fir trees have blue-green needles are 1/2 to 1/2 inches long; nice shape and good aroma, a citrus scent; good needle retention.

They have good foliage colour, good needle retention, and a pleasing shape and aroma.

In nature, they can live to 350 years.



Concolor Fir Needles



White Fir, a.k.a Concolor Fir

Spruce

Norway Spruce

Norway Spruce needles are 1/2" to 1" long and shiny, dark green.

Needle retention is poor without proper care; strong fragrance; nice conical shape.

The Norway Spruce is the traditional Christmas tree which can be found in many homes throughout the UK and Europe.

Norway Spruce can be found naturally in Northern and Central Europe.

The tree features pointed mid-green colour needles with long cylindrical brown cones which hang down. Many people enjoy its scent once it's indoors during December.



Norway Spruce needles

Blue Spruce -

Picea pungens, the Blue Spruce is a naturally symmetrical tree that has dark green to powdery blue; very stiff needles, which are 3/4" to 1 and 1/2" long. They will drop needles in a warm room; but is still best among spruce varieties for needle retention.

The branches are stiff and will support many heavy decorations.

It can live in nature 600-800 years. The needles really do have a bluish look to them, as shown in the photo at right.



Blue Spruce Needles



Blue Spruce

Colorado Blue Spruce

Often used for stuffing pine-pillows, these sharp needles are 1 - 1 and 1/2 in. in length.

This species is bluish-gray in colour and has a bad odor when needles are crushed. Colorado Blue Spruces have good symmetrical form and has attractive blue foliage.

It also has good needle retention.



Colorado Blue Spruce needles



Colorado Blue Spruce

Serbian Spruce

Serbian spruce is native to a small region of limestone mountains along the upper Drina river of Bosnia and Serbia, in Southeastern Europe.

The upper surface of the needles is glossy, dark green in contrast to the whitish lower surface.



Serbian Spruce needles



Serbian Spruce

White Spruce

White Spruce needles are 1/2 to 3/4 inch long; green to bluish-green, short, stiff needles. The crushed needles have an unpleasant odor; good needle retention. State tree of South Dakota. The White Spruce is excellent for ornaments; it's short, stiff needles are 1/2 - 3/4 in. long and have a blunt tip. They are bluish-green - green in colour, but have a bad aroma when needles are crushed. They have excellent foliage colour and have a good, natural shape. The needle retention is better in a White Spruce than it is among other spruces.



**White Spruces
needles**



White Spruce

Pines

Afghan Pine

Afghan Pines have soft, short needles with sturdy branches; open appearance; mild fragrance. It keeps well. Many are grown in Texas; but it is native to Afghanistan, Russia and Pakistan.

Also called: Mondell Pine, Lone Star Christmas Tree, Pinus Eldarica.



**Afghan Pine
needles**



Afghan Pine

Austrian Pine

Austrian Pines have dark green needles that are 4 to 6 inches long and it retains needles well. They have a moderate fragrance.

It is native to Austria, northern Italy and southern Mediterranean Europe from Spain to the eastern Mediterranean.

Historians suggest that it may have been one of the original Christmas trees, as it was worshipped by the Romans over 2000 years ago



Austrian Pine

Lodgepole Pine

The Lodge Pole Pine Christmas tree is a native to the Rocky Mountains in the western in the western United States.

However, the Lodgepole found greater popularity in the UK as a Christmas tree.

It was introduced to the UK in 1855 and growers like its resistance to pests and its ability to grow well on poor wet soils.

Mature trees grow to 30 metres.

Typically available from 4ft to 12ft - this a low needle drop tree.

It forms clean, gradually tapering shafts which were used by Native Americans to make their lodges, hence the name "lodgepole pine."

See the photo at right.



Lodgepole Pine needles



Lodgepole Pine

Scots Pine

Sometimes mistakenly called "Scotch Pine", this is one of the most common UK Christmas trees. The colour is a bright green.

It has stiff branches with stiff, dark green needles one inch long; holds needles for four weeks; needles will stay on even when dry. The tree has a naturally open appearance and more room for ornaments.

Scots Pines keeps aroma throughout the season. Fact: it was introduced into United States by European settlers.

The most common Christmas tree in the U.S., and still popular in Scotland, the Scots

Pine has an excellent survival rate, is easy to replant, has great keeping qualities and will remain fresh throughout the holiday season. See photo at right.



Scots Pine



White Pine -

The White Pine, sometimes called the Eastern White Pine, has soft, blue-green needles, 2 to 5 inches long in bundles of five; retains needles throughout the holiday season; very full appearance; little or no fragrance; less allergic reactions as compared to more fragrant trees.

The largest pine in the U.S., the White Pine has soft, flexible needles and is bluish-green in colour.

Needles are 2 1/2 - 5 in. long. White Pines have good needle retention, but have little aroma.

The slender branches will support fewer and smaller decorations as compared to Scots Pine.

They aren't recommended for heavy ornaments.

Its wood is used in cabinets, interior finish and carving. Native Americans used the inner bark as food and early colonists used the inner bark to make cough medicine.



White Pine



Eastern White Pine needles

Alternative Christmas trees

While the varieties below are rarely seen in the U.K. as cut trees for Christmas, they may be found at nurseries as potted trees, which makes them a good option for a small flat, a house plant or for planting in the garden after Christmas.

Cedars

Cedar trees are rarely used in the UK as a Christmas tree, but may be a good alternative in a year when supplies of other trees are tight.

Deodara Cedar

Cedars have short, bluish-green needles; branches become pendulous at the tips. The tree is native to Himalayas. Deodara wood in Asia was used to build temples. In ancient Egypt Deodara wood was used to make coffins for mummies. [Deodara Cedar More info](#)



Deodara Cedar

Cypress

Cypress, while grown in the UK and used in landscaping, are rarely used as Christmas trees.

Arizona Cypress

Native southwestern cypress with soft-textured gray-green foliage.



Arizona Cypress

Leland Cypress

Photo at right - foliage is dark green to gray colour; has upright branches with a feathery appearance; has a light scent; good for people with allergies to other Christmas tree types. The Leyland Cypress is dark green - gray in colour and has very little aroma. Because it is not in the Pine or Fir family, it does not produce sap, so that those with an allergy to sap can still enjoy a Leyland as their Christmas Tree.



Leyland Cypress
Needles



Leyland Cypress

Potted Christmas trees

Norfolk Island Pine

A tree from the tropics, these make a great houseplant AND they look great decorated as a Christmas tree.

- [See this page for more information about Norfolk Island Pines.](#)



Norfolk Island Pine