

# Balsam Fir

*Abies balsamea*

Balsam fir is a common native Christmas tree. Needles are flat and fragrant, cones are often sticky with resin, and you might be able to spot “bubbles” of resin beneath the bark. Firs are important winter food and cover for moose, deer, lynx, bobcats, bear, hare, grouse, and songbirds. Balsam fir wood may be used for pulpwood, but often individual boughs are harvested to make fragrant Christmas wreaths. A row of closely spaced balsam fir will make a natural windbreak.

**Height:** 40' to 60'

Balsam firs grow less than a foot per year, and reach their maximum height at about 50 years. Their lifespans are relatively short for a conifer, usually 80 - 100 years.

**Planting environment:**

*Soil:* Adaptable: loam, silt loam, clay loam, and sandy soils

*Moisture:* Likes moist soils with good drainage, but can grow in some wetter sites.

*Sunlight:* Very shade tolerant (will thrive in shade, like beneath existing trees or buildings).

Plant seedlings 6'-10' apart. Mix with other species if you want better wildlife habitat or to reduce the change of diseases. You can plant in rows if you plan to harvest.

**Maintenance:**

Maintenance depends on your goals. Balsam firs are low-maintenance if you want to improve wildlife habitat, but you can thin trees to promote growth if you plan to harvest them.

**Top diseases/pests:**

1. Spruce budworm
2. Heart rot

