

Norway Spruce Plantings by Sally Cureton

Recently several homeowners in the Greenview Hills area planted 250 Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*) seedlings obtained from the Virginia Department of Forestry. While not a native plant, this tree is one of the most widely planted spruces in the United States. It has become naturalized in some parts of North America, though not enough to be considered invasive. A member of the Pine family, it is a very large tree that can grow to a height of 35-55 feet. With dense foliage that will easily block out wind and neighbors, it creates a safe haven for wildlife. As a bonus, it also makes an attractive showpiece.

The Norway Spruce is an extremely hardy tree and the most disease-resistant one available. While it prefers full sun, it will also thrive in partial sun. Very tolerant of different kinds of soils, this tree naturally prefers a rich, moist soil. But, it is probably the most adaptable common evergreen tree there is and will adapt to harsh conditions, including poor, clay or rocky soils. Keeping this tree watered the first few years is essential, but once established, it is especially drought tolerant. Norway Spruce grows to be broadly pyramidal with large showy 4-7 inch cones in the upper two-thirds of the tree.

This tree has a rather rapid growth rate. If it is in an optimum location it can add 2-3 feet per year to its height. And, with its deep rich color, it is an unusually attractive tree. In addition to being used as an ornamental specimen, it is widely used in forestry for timber and paper production. In Europe, it is widely planted as a Christmas tree. Attractive, fast-growing and easy to care for, Norway Spruce should help to make our wooded areas up here in the kettle even more appealing as they grow to maturity.

