





Key to Colorado Conifers of the Eastern Slope

- I. Leaves are scale-like...  **Rocky Mountain Junipers**
- II. Leaves are needle-like..... Go to A

- A. Needle-like leaves originate in singles from the stem... Go to back page
If no, go to AA.



- AA. Needle-like leaves originate from the stem in bunches (clusters) of two or more..... Go to Pines

PINES




Leaves 5 to a bunch: go to B
Leaves 2-3 to a bunch: go to BB

- B. Leaves 5 to a bunch:
 - 1. Needle-leaves 2–3 inches long, young stems very limber – able to twist around your finger, cones 3-8” long.....7,500-11,000ft..... **Limber Pine**
 - 2. Needle-like leaves 1–1.5 inches long, strongly curved, densely packed and sticky; cones 2”, scales tipped with long, stiff prickle...7,500-11,000ft..... **Bristlecone Pine**
- BB. Needle-like leaves two to three in a bunch:
 - 1. Needle-like, 6–10 inches long. Two or three in a bunch; seed cones 3–6 inches long with scales tipped with a stiff spine.....5,800 – 8,000ft..... **Ponderosa Pine**
 - 2. Needle-like leaves 1.5–3 inches long, in bunches of two.....Go to a below
 - a. Needle-like leaves 1–1.5 inches long, seed cones 2 inches long & resinous. Mature cone scales open wide. Tree form rounded & shrubby.....4,500 – 7,000ft. ... **Pinyon Pine**
 - b. Needle-like leaves 2–3 inches long; seed cones 1–2 inches long with scale tipped with a stiff prickle; tree forms a straight pole-like trunk...7,500 – 11,000ft.... **Lodgepole Pine**



Needle-like leaves originate in singles from the stem:

- A. Leaf cross section flat. Cannot roll between fingers.  Go to Firs.
- B. Needle-like leaves four-sided in cross-section; able to roll single leaf between fingers  Go to Spruces.

FIRS

1. Flat-like leaves have noticeable leaf scar when leaf is removed and a small leaf stalk.  
Seed cones hang downward and have three-pointed bracts at end of cone scales. Terminal buds pointed; reddish brown at twig tips.....5,800 – 10,000.....**Douglas Fir**
2. No leaf stalk visible at base of leaf when leaf removed. 
Seed cones point upright on top branches only.....Go to a and b below.
- a. Leaves 1–1.8 inches long, turned up, with rows of tiny white dots on both sides; rust-red bark on twig tips.....8,000 – 12,000.....**Subalpine Fir**
- b. Leaves 2 -3 inches long, silver-green color on both sides.....7,000 – 10,000ft.....**White Fir**

SPRUCES

Needle-like leaves four-sided in cross-section; able to roll single leaf between fingers. 
Defoliated twigs bear stubby peg-like leaf scars **go below**

1. Leaves 1 inch or less long, pale green, mildly sharp tips.
Reddish scaly bark, seed cones shorter than 2.5 inches ...8,000-12,000ft....**Engelmann Spruce**
2. Leaves are one inch or longer, obvious blue-green in color, very sharp at the tips;
seed cones longer than 2.5 inches long.....7,500 – 9,500ft.....**Blue Spruce**

DEFINITIONS

Leaf scar—mark on stem left when leaf is removed.

Leaf stalk— a narrow stem-like structure attaching leaf to stem.

IT'S EASY TO REMEMBER:

- *Pines are plural* (more than one leaf bundled together).
- *Spruces are square and spiky*. Also, they have scaly bark and the cones hang down. The peg-like, woody projections left behind as the leaves shed makes the branches of spruces feel rough.
- *Firs are flat and friendly*. Also, they have smooth bark and the cones are upright on the stem. Fir branches do not have the woody projections left behind when the leaves are shed, thus the branches feel smooth.