

Serbian Spruce (*Picea omorika*)

Nebraska Forest Service

There are several kinds of spruce that are planted in Nebraska. The most common are Colorado, Norway and white (sometimes referred to as Black Hills). The Serbian spruce (*Picea omorika*) is a new comer to the spruce line up and there is not a great deal of information about the tree. It has been planted in the past but it is now becoming a little more common as we look for more diversity in our evergreen plantings.

Judging by the characteristics and performance of Serbian spruce in Europe, the tree will make a good choice for community landscapes and as a specimen plant around the home. It is disease and insect resistant and forms a narrow, pyramidal silhouette with graceful arching branches. The upper surface of the needle is glossy, dark green in contrast to the whitish lower surface. The needle is short and flat resembling the foliage of fir. The bark is a coffee color.



Its relatively narrow spread makes it good for smaller sites where spruces are desired, and for privacy screens on narrow sites. Serbian spruce will grow to 60 feet on good sites but probably will not make that height here in the Nebraska/Iowa region. This spruce is native to southeastern Europe (southwestern Serbia). The Latin name, *omorika*, is the Balkan vernacular name for spruce. It was introduced into Britain in 1889 and is frequently planted in parks and gardens.



This spruce is best in full sun but it will tolerate light shade. It is also tolerant of a wide range of soils but does not like wet sites. The tree is drought tolerant once it has become established.

Serbian spruce may make a good specimen tree in your yard or as a group of trees. Some references warn that the tree may winterburn on difficult sites and therefore should not be used as a windbreak plant. But sometimes trees don't do what we think they will do.