

# The effect of drought on xylem formation in Norway spruce

Tuula Jyske<sup>1</sup>, Harri Mäkinen<sup>1</sup>, Pekka Nöjd<sup>1</sup>, Heinrich Spiecker<sup>2</sup>, and Ilari Lumme<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Finnish Forest Research Institute, Vantaa Unit, PO Box 18, FI-01301 Vantaa, Finland

<sup>2</sup>Albert-Ludwig University, Institute for Growth, Department for Growth, Tennenbacher Straße 4, D-79106, Freiburg, Germany

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## Background

- Extreme weather events, like summer drought, will increase in boreal region.
- Climate extremes with rising mean temperature may decrease the vitality of Norway spruce.
- Tree susceptibility to windstorm damages, insect attacks and pathogens may increase.
- Possible decrease of timber production?

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## Aim

- to study the effects of artificial drought on growth rate, wood density and tracheid properties of mature Norway spruce,
- to find out whether nutrient availability affects the drought-sensitivity.

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## Material & methods

- Drought and control treatments on fertilised and non-fertilised plots:  $D_0F_0$ ,  $D_1F_0$ ,  $D_0F_1$  and  $D_1F_1$
- Two sites in southern Finland, 40 trees
- Radial and vertical growth, wood density, and tracheid dimensions



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## Results

### **Drought significantly reduced the tree growth rate:**

- height growth by 23–31%
- radial growth by 15–19%
- the number of tracheids by 14–29%
- latewood proportion by 3–11%.

### **Drought had small influence on tracheid properties:**

- increased the diameter of earlywood tracheids by 2–5%
- decreased the diameter of latewood tracheids by 7%–23%
- increased cell wall thickness by 3–8%, especially in latewood
- increased the proportion of cell walls within rings by 6–18%

### **Drought slightly increased wood density:**

- mean, early- and latewood density, minimum and maximum density slightly by 0–8%

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## Conclusions

- Drought decreased the annual radial and height growth.
- Drought had a small influence on tracheid properties and wood density.
- No differences in drought-sensitivity between fertilised and unfertilised trees.

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