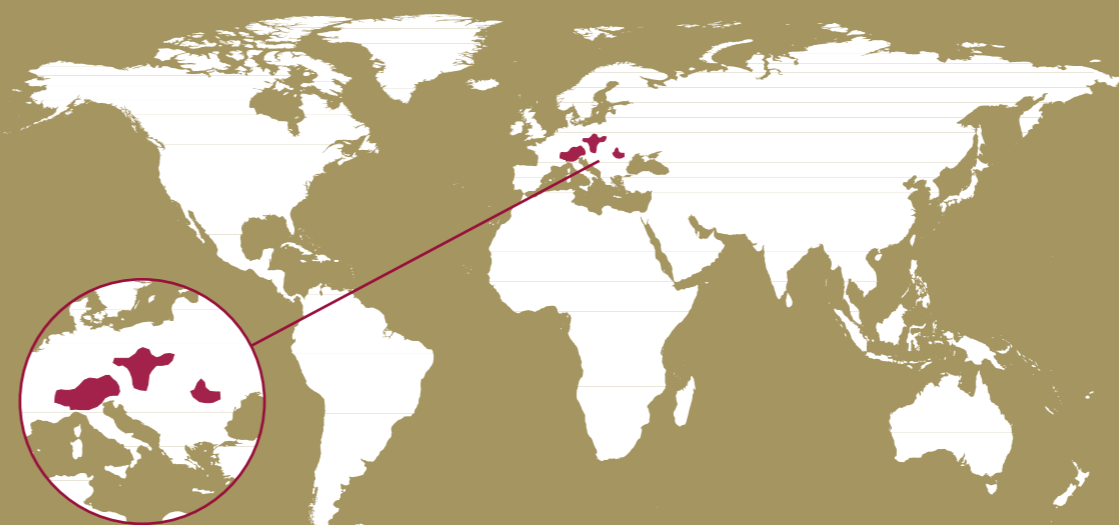


European larch *Larix decidua*

The larch is one of only five deciduous conifers. This tree is sporting a spring flush of fresh green needles.



Natural distribution of European larch



Young larch 'cones' are reddish in colour, becoming more woody with age.

illustrations by John White

This tree is a tough customer.

Larch is very valuable because it produces one of the toughest timbers of any conifer. It is so durable that it can even be used for making boats; in fact the hulls of many yachts are still made from larch. It is also commonly used for fencing, railway sleepers and construction.

However, commercial larch plantations like the one in front of you are not very common in the UK. Sitka spruce can produce more timber because it keeps its needles in winter and can grow all year round, unlike the larch. Sitka is also less fussy about growing in boggy ground.

Here at Bedgebury we are growing a number of larch hybrids, trying to find out which has the greatest potential for timber. It is part of the commercial forestry research that has been going on here for decades.

Did you know?

The larch can survive winter temperatures as low as -50°C . It loses its needles in winter to help it to survive in such extreme conditions.