

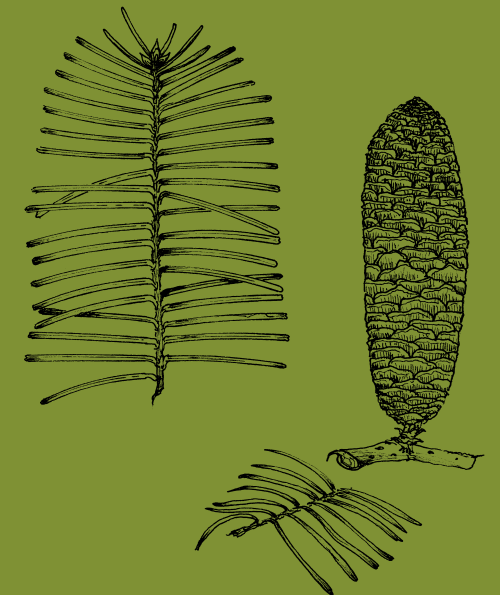
Grand fir *Abies grandis*



'The Old Man of Kent' is our tallest and most famous tree. Here a member of Bedgebury staff (on the right) shows a Blue Peter presenter how to climb it safely.



Natural distribution of grand fir



illustrations by John White

Grand fir needles are shiny dark green on their upper surface and have a wonderful citrus smell when crushed. The upright cones are typical of all fir trees.

Is this the biggest Christmas tree you have ever seen?

Grand fir foliage is sweet smelling and attractive, so it is used as a Christmas tree in North America, and the foliage is used for festive decorations. It is also planted as an ornamental tree in large parks and cities.

Grand firs are not popular forestry trees, either in the UK or North America. Their timber is soft and relatively weak so it can only be used for paper pulp, packing crates and other cheap construction work. In addition the wood splits easily during felling and resin blisters on the bark surface make any chainsaw work a messy business.

Did you know?

The grand fir is aptly named – it is the largest of all the firs. Some individuals on Vancouver Island approach 75m in height. You are standing near a grand fir known as 'the Old Man of Kent'. At 50m tall, this is Kent's largest tree.