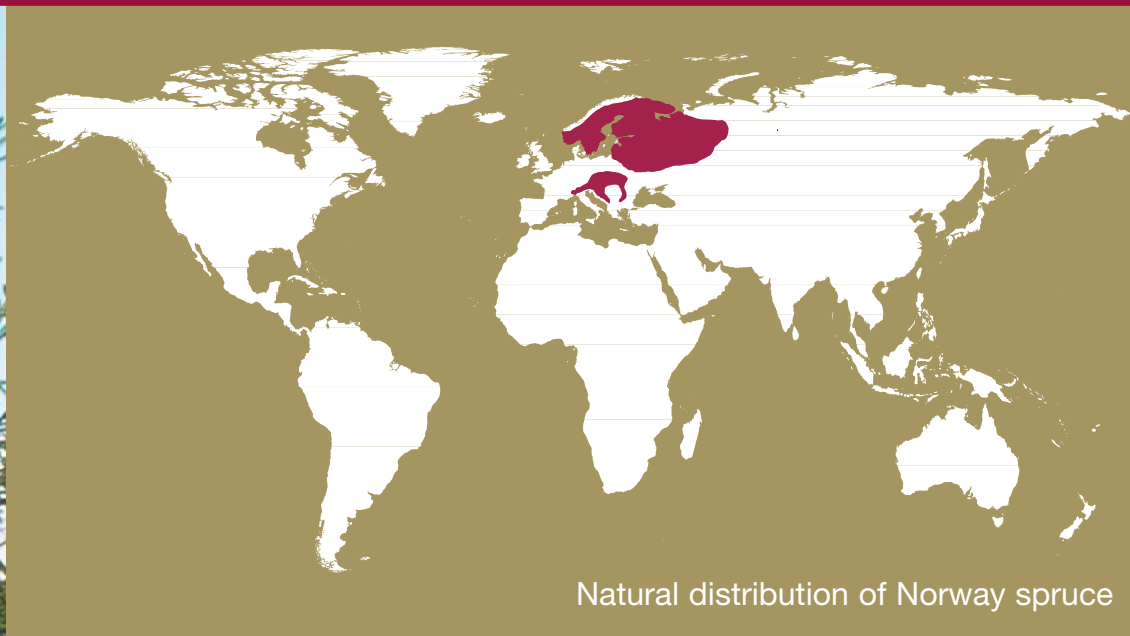


Norway spruce *Picea abies*



Norway spruce being grown as Christmas trees.



Natural distribution of Norway spruce



illustration by John White

The Norway spruce has cones that can be up to 15cm long. They droop downwards, like all spruce cones.

You might be more familiar with this tree than you realise.

Millions of spruce trees are grown each year. They are harvested as Christmas trees when they are about six years old. Norway spruce is also used as a forestry tree; in fact it is one of the most widely-used softwood timber and pulpwood trees in Europe. The timber is light and strong, used for everything from general carpentry to aeroplane fuselages. In some European countries the young leaves and shoots are used to make a drink known as 'spruce beer'. The resin is used to make turpentine, and an essential oil from the needles is used in some perfumes.

Did you know?

Prince Albert is thought to have started the fashion for spruce Christmas trees in 1841 when he had one decorated at Windsor Castle.