

RINACEAE

FOLKLORE,  
MEDICINE

&  
OTHER  
USES

# SPRUCE

*Picea*



## MEDICINAL

- ★ Gum can be used to prevent infection and act as a disinfectant during healing. The boiled solution can also treat urinary problems. When smeared on canvas, gum can relieve headaches, chest pain, and blood poisoning
- ★ Boiled needle solution can be used to purify blood and treat coughing/sore chests when drank and treat hives/rashes when used superficially

## ETYMOLOGY

*Picea* : derived from *peuca* meaning tar (resin tapped trees)

Spruce comes from Middle "from Prussia" *Sprus* and *Pruce*, Old French word for Prussia



## FOLKLORE

- ★ Swiss folklore believes that the spruce houses a special spirit of the forest ("wise man of the forest") who protects livestock and beckons prosperity
- ★ Eurasian Yakuti people believe that shaman are born with the great spruce tree of the North
- ★ Spruce is the symbol of Artemis, Greek goddess of the hunt
- ★ In Gaelic mythology, spruces are the sacred tree of *Druantia*, the protector of all trees and eternal mother goddess
- ★ North American Hopi people believe that spruces hold the spirit of an ancient medicine man who turned himself into a tree

## USES

- ★ Spruce gum used as chewing gum and treats for children
- ★ Vikings made spruce beer for long voyages, making it a staple on sea vessels before it became popular in the American colonies
- ★ Roots used to make string
- ★ Construction due to low density, affordability, and stability used to make doors, cabinetry, and barrels. The long cellulose fiber is used to manufacture paper and boxes. Its lightweight nature makes it ideal for boats while its resonating qualities are perfect for violins and pianos

# FIR

*Abies*



## ETYMOLOGY

- ★ *Abies* : to rise in Latin
- ★ Common name originates from Old Norse (*fyri*) or Old Danish (*fyr*)

## USES

Construction, timber, solid wood panels, windows, doors, flooring, packaging, cabinetry



## MEDICINAL

- ★ High vitamin C richness makes firs useful in treating rheumatism, sore throats, and headaches
- ★ Shoots and oil can reduce mucus production, act as mild anti-bacterial, and painkiller by increasing blood flow when applied superficially
- ★ Can be taken orally to treat a variety of respiratory ailments (coughs, bronchitis, etc.)

## FOLKLORE

- ★ symbol of renewal, constancy, strength, fertility, and immortality
- ★ Its hardness made it a symbol of strength against resilient weather
- ★ Greeks associated fir with Artemis and Romans with Saturn
- ★ Celts put sprigs of Balsam fir on their doors to ward off spirits
- ★ Ancient druids believe firs to be a symbol of honesty because of their tall and upright nature
- ★ Traditional "Christmas Tree" in paganism

# PINE

*pinus*

## ETYMOLOGY

- ★ *Pinus*: Latin derived from Old English *pin* and Old French *pin*



## FOLKLORE



- ★ Fertility symbol linked to Dionysus and his worshipers, who would carry pine cone-tipped wands, representing love and lust because of its phallic shape
- ★ Sacred tree of Pan, God of the wild
- ★ Symbol of immortality with it retaining its green year-round
- ★ Symbol of renewal, rebirth, and a hopeful future during the Japanese New Year
- ★ Pines tend to grow in groups and were once called the Seven Sisters; however, one was always cursed to die while the others flourished

## MEDICINAL

- ★ Indigenous groups in North America used pine needles and steam to open the sinuses, relieving bronchitis and asthma
- ★ Pine can be used to protect against infection, act as a mild antibacterial and antifungal, and treat muscle and nerve pain
- ★ Traditional Chinese medicine uses pine to relieve stress, memory loss, anxiety, fatigue, and nervous tension

## USES

- ★ Extremely abundant wood in the United States with yellow pine being the favorite of many manufacturers due to its strength-weight ratio and toughness. Its versatility makes it popular for house frames, industrial boarding, crates, and transportation materials
- ★ "Workhorse of manufacturers and transportation professionals"

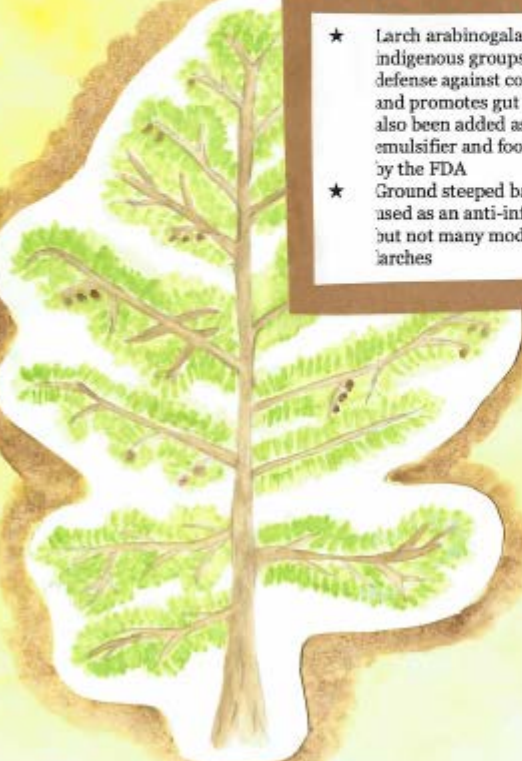


# LARCH

*Larix*

## MEDICINAL

- ★ Larch arabinogalactan, used by indigenous groups, serves as a defense against common colds and promotes gut health. It has also been added as an emulsifier and food stabilizer by the FDA
- ★ Ground steeped bark could be used as an anti-inflammatory, but not many modern uses for larches



## FOLKLORE



- ★ Larches said to ward off enchantment in European folklore and protect against evil when worn or burned
- ★ In Tungus Evenki (Siberia), the larch is called *Tuuru* ("World Tree") and is considered to be the tether between the Earth and the North Star. Shamans were said to spiritually move through the *Tuuru* from the branches (upperworld) middleworld (trunk) and underworld (roots) in search of spiritual answers

## ETYMOLOGY

- ★ *Larix* derived from "Laringa" during Julius Caesar's campaign in the European Alps, named after the Larignum settlement
- ★ *Akemantak* is the Algonquin word for "wood for snowshoes, leading to the common name of tamarack

## USES

- ★ Wood extremely heavy and rot resistant (due to high resin content), making it great telephone poles, fence posts, and floor boards
- ★ Ojibwe people used the resin to seal canoes and the bar for housing
- ★ Algonquin people used wood to make boats and snow shoes
- ★ Sap can be used to make "gum" turpentine for paints and varnishes. It was also an early disinfectant

# DOUGLAS FIR

*Pseudotsuga*



- ★ Douglas firs help protect small mice during forest fires, according to Pacific Northwest Indigenous lore
- ★ Many cultures hang wreaths of Douglas fir in the winter as a symbol of resilience and strength against illness, negative energy, and bad spirits

## ETYMOLOGY

- ★ *Pseudotsuga*: Latin for "false hemlock"



## USES

- ★ Commonly used as a Christmas Tree
- ★ Douglas fir resin used for gluing harpoon heads, waterproofing canoes, and fishing hooks
- ★ The wood is very lightweight and used for flooring, doors, windows, trim and joinery, furniture making, boat making, and siding

## MEDICINAL

- ★ Terpenes in resin have antiseptic, antimicrobial, and anti-inflammatory properties to fight infection and facilitate healing
- ★ High vitamin C content helps to boost immune support and overall health
- ★ Inhaling steam from needles can soothe common cold and flu symptoms while being applied topically can ease sinus/chest congestion
- ★ Indigenous groups have used bark to treat digestive issues, such as diarrhea and internal bleeding

# HEMLOCK

*Tsuga*



## FOLKLORE

- ★ Hemlock deadwood hosts reishi mushrooms (important medicinal mushrooms)

## FOLKLORE

- ★ Hemlocks are very prevalent in North American Indigenous folklore, specifically the Mimac and Secena people
- ★ The major symbolism that emerges from their stories include hemlocks as a source of warmth, an aid for magical transformation, hemlock offering aid after magically growing from a needle, and being able to withstand the winter or holding the winter at bay



## ETYMOLOGY

- ★ *Tsuga*: named after the Japanese word for "mother" and "tree"
- ★ The commonly named after the hemlock flower (*Conium maculatum*), which has a similar smell to the tree



## USES

- ★ Used for leather tanning and fur processing because of high tannic acid content
- ★ Its water resistance, durability, and stability make it an ideal material for long-lasting furniture and flooring
- ★ Hemlock is great for interior woodworking and moldings, leading to its wide usage for joints, veneered interior paneling, doors, and windows, as well as for pulp and newsprint
- ★ The tannin rich bark is used for staining wood and textiles
- ★ Hemlock was used for cabin building in early Pennsylvania settlements
- ★ Indigenous groups have used hemlock to make combs, spoons, spits, and other small carved objects

# CEDAR

*Cedrus*



## MEDICINAL

- ★ Cedar tea has compounds of Cedrol, Cedrine, and Thujopsene which have anti-inflammatory, antispasmodic, astringent, insecticidal, and sedative qualities
- ★ Cedar tea helps with respiratory issues, immune support, and relieve cold/flu symptoms

## ETYMOLOGY

- ★ *Cedrus* is derived from Greek *Kedros*, which led to the Latin name for tree (*Cedrus*)



## FOLKLORE

- ★ Important in Tsalagi Cherokee folklore as cedar wood is believed to hold protective spirits within. The wood is often carried around the neck in medicine bags and is burned in the entrances of houses to protect against evil spirits
- ★ Cedars of Lebanon are referenced many times in ancient text, such as in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, where Gilgamesh claimed he would build his great city with the cedar wood, to the Solomon building Jerusalem out of cedar and naming one of his most important buildings "the house of the forest of Lebanon"

## USES

- ★ Used for floorboards, building beams, doors, and window frames
- ★ Its aromatic oils are extracted and used for medicinal purposes, as well as an insect repellent and antifungal
- ★ The ancient Egyptians used cedar resin and wood chips during the mummification process, which helped preserve their bodies as the cedar enzymes are capable of surviving thousands of years.



# GOLDEN LARCH

*Pseudolarix*



## ETYMOLOGY

- ★ *Pseudolarix* : "false larix," or false larch, in Latin

## USES

- ★ Used to make furniture, bridges, and boats; however, it is mainly used ornamentally

## MEDICINAL

- ★ Considered to be one of the 50 fundamental herbs in Chinese herbalism
- ★ The bark has fungicidal properties that are used to treat ringworm, specifically defending against *Epidermophyton* and *Trichophyton* fungi that cause ringworm
- ★ Can be used to reduce dampness and relieve itching

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