

EVERGREEN CONIFER TREES

A SIMPLE BOTANICAL KEY FOR THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

START HERE: CONIFERS



follow the lines and choose one direction to go based on each characteristic.



Leaves like
scales

Mature
cones are
like wood

Mature
cones are
like berries

Needles in
clusters

Leaves like
needles

Needles not clustered



JUNIPER

- Scales in groups of 2 or 3 all around the twig
- Bark looks shredded and grey



WESTERN WHITE PINE

- Needles in bundles of 5 and about 4 inches long
- Needles are whitish blue-green and flexible
- Cones 6–11 inches long



SHORE PINE OR LODGEPOLE PINE

- Needles in bundles of 2 and about 2 inches long
- Cones are about 2 inches long and prickly



PONDEROSA PINE

- Needles in bundles of 3 and 5-8 inches long
- Cones less than 5 inches long
- Older bark is orange and looks like puzzle pieces



YELLOW CEDAR

- Leaf tips look like crab claws where pollen cones fall off
- Mature cones woody and round
- Branch tips flare out from twig
- Bark whitish grey, soft and fibrous



WESTERN RED CEDAR

- Cones shaped like a rose bud
- Branches lay generally flat
- Bark grey to reddish brown, soft and fibrous



INCENSE CEDAR

- Cones shaped like a bird's foot with 3 lobes
- Branches do not lay flat



PORT ORFORD CEDAR

- Scales tiny with a grey "x" on the underside
- Mature cones woody and round
- Branch tips stay close to twig



PACIFIC YEW

- *Note: the entire tree is toxic!*
- Cones red and berry-like
- Needles grow horizontally, are pointed at the tip and soft to touch
- Needles dark green above, lime green below
- Twigs from last year are green



SPRUCES

- Needles feel sharp and are all the same length
- Cones feel papery
- Bark has plates that fall off like potato chips



WESTERN HEMLOCK

- Needles are blunt and different lengths
- Cones are small
- Top of the tree ("the lead") is droopy



DOUGLAS FIR

- Needles all same length like a bottle brush, not sharp to touch
- Cones have a 3-pronged bract that looks like a mouse's hind feet and tail
- Groovy bark is grey to cinnamon brown



GRAND FIR

- Needles different lengths and grow horizontally (in a flat arrangement).
- Crushed needles smell like grapefruit.
- Cones about 4 inches and green to reddish with smooth scales



NOBLE FIR

- Silvery needles all point upward like a hairbrush
- Needles have 2 white bands on the upper and lower surface
- Cones 5-8 inches, barrel shaped and have bracts between scales



Cones hang
down on the
branch



True Firs: cones
point upward,
and young bark
has blisters