

**CARE AND MAINTENANCE
OF
SPRUCE**

BOTANICAL AND COMMON NAME: (1) *Picea mariana* - Black spruce
(2) *Picea rubens* - Red spruce
(3) *Picea glauca* - White spruce

CHARACTERISTICS: This material, because it has been collected, may consist of hybrids of the three spruces listed. However, red spruce is distinguishable by its orangy-brown twigs. White spruce needles are, like those of the black spruce, green to bluish green, but unlike the black spruce, are very aromatic when crushed. The needles on all three spruces are very short. The material makes for very elegant literati bonsai; it also lends itself to impressive traditional styles and shohin bonsai. Spruce bud back quite well.

PRUNING, PINCHING AND WIRING: These activities are carried out in spring. The caution in pruning is to **not** cut through needles. Pinching is once a year activity and is carried out when the brilliant spring growth is nearly open. The new growth can all be pinched/pulled out, or portions can be left. It all depends on what you want to accomplish. Opening up the tree by pruning and wiring will not only establish design but also encourage back budding. Wiring is done just before the new growth is fully out.

REPOTTING AND SOIL: Spruce have a relatively late spring. Repotting is done when the tree is seen to be vigorously growing: the buds are turgid and pushing out of their coverings. Roots are combed out and dead and heavy roots are removed. Spruces thrive in well draining soil, so make sure your mix meets this criterion.

FERTILIZING: Generally, different brands of a 20-20-20 fertilizer is used and applied every two weeks.

WATERING: Spruces will tolerate being a bit on the dry side but generally will require watering at least once a day. During the spring and fall growing bursts restrict watering but not to the point of dehydration!

DISEASES AND PESTS: Mites are about the only problem. This pest is easily dealt with by commercially available miticides.

SEASONAL CARE: Spruces should be grown in full sun from early spring to winter storage. For winter care, digging the bonsai into your garden will provide sufficient protection against the cold. While these spruces are exceptionally winter hardy, they should not be allowed to dry out. Surrounding them with a snow fence and covering them totally with snow (if you have it) will provide further protection.