BALSAM FIR
Abies balsamea (L.) P. Mill.
Plant Symbol = ABBA

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program

Alternate Names
Pinus balsamea L.

Uses
Balsam fir is used primarily for Christmas trees and pulpwood, although some lumber is produced from it in New England and the Lake States. The wood is light in weight, low in bending and compressive strength, moderately limber, soft, and low in resistance to shock.

Status
Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant’s current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description
Balsam fir is a small to medium sized coniferous tree. Growth occurs in whorls of branches surrounding an upright leader or terminal, making a symmetrical tree with a broad base and narrow top. It is relatively short-lived and is considered a sub-climax type species in the New England states, but may be a climax type in the zone below timberline.

Balsam fir is distributed throughout the Northeast and upper Midwest. For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

Establishment
The use of natural regeneration methods for balsam fir is very effective on open and disturbed sites (heavily cut areas), but an adequate seed source must exist. This species can also be readily grown in nurseries, for transplanting to abandoned fields, Christmas tree plantations, and open areas. Use conventional tree planting techniques and equipment. Three or four year old seedling stock should be utilized.

Management
This section is under development. Please consult the Related Web Sites links on the PLANTS Plant Profile.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)
Although most available seedlings of balsam fir are of unknown parentage, some are produced from local selections.
For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site (http://plants.usda.gov) or the Plant Materials Program Web site (http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov).

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