

CANADA'S ARBOREAL EMBLEMS

An overview of Canada's
official trees and their wood

International Wood Collectors Society



Canada Region



Published by the Canadian Region of the
International Wood Collectors Society

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S.G. = specific gravity; pcf = pounds per cubic foot
SPF = spruce/pine/fir

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The Cover – Canada's official tree, the maple (generic), is represented on the cover by a sugar maple, *Acer saccharum*. The background shows sugar maple wood with a "bird's-eye" figure, a highly prized and beautiful hardwood. The maple leaf began to serve as a Canadian symbol as early as the 1700s, and has been portrayed on Canadian coins since 1876. Since the proclamation of Canada's new flag, in 1965, the maple leaf has become Canada's most prominent Canadian symbol.

Message from the Tree Canada Foundation

Tree Canada Foundation and the International Wood Collectors Society are pleased to present the second edition of “Canada’s Arboreal Emblems”.

This booklet provides readers with a description of each provincial and territorial tree. It reflects the pride and attachment Canadians have toward Canada’s forests.

Production of this booklet was made possible by the financial support of Natural Resources Canada.

Yours truly,

Jeff Monty, R.P.F.
President



Tree Canada Foundation
www.tcf-fca.ca

INTRODUCTION

About this Booklet: The purpose of this publication is to inform the reader about Canada's arboreal emblems or official trees. Each of Canada's ten provinces and two of its three territories has selected such an emblem but only in rather recent history. While Canada will be 136 years old in the year 2003, all of Canada's arboreal emblems are less than twenty years old in the same year.

The main purpose of the IWCS is to advance information on wood. In conjunction with the purposes of the International Wood Collectors Society in Canada, therefore, it is fitting that a description of Canada's official trees and the wood of these trees be offered, for they all are trees that have played important social, cultural and economic roles in Canadian history.

Presentation Format: For each province, the provincial coat of arms or shield and its date of entry into Confederation is shown. Then, the arboreal emblem or official tree with its common name, its scientific name, and its date of adoption is indicated. Following that is a description of the tree and its wood and uses of the wood, colour diagrams of the tree, its fruit and foliage, with a description of its natural range, economic and cultural importance and other features of interest.

It is hoped that this contribution to the literature on trees and wood, while by no means unique in detail, will add to a better knowledge of Canada's natural and cultural heritage, and a greater appreciation of the trees and forests of Canada and the many benefits they provide for Canadians.

Chuck Holder,
IWCS President-elect, Calgary, Canada



Canada

July 1, 1867

Arboreal emblem

proclaimed April, 1996

maple, generic

Acer spp

érable, générique

The tree - of the 100 species of maple known, 13 of these are native to North America, and ten are native to Canada. Most of these species reach a large tree size. Maples grow in all areas of Canada "from sea to shining sea." The leaf on Canada's flag is stylized and most closely resembling that of the sugar maple, the main source of maple sugar.



This set of stamps was issued to celebrate the beauty of the maples growing throughout Canada.

Canada's tree
maple, generic

(*Acer spp*)

The wood: Maple is hard, medium- to heavy-weight, with S.G. up to 0.56 for sugar maple, light tan to creamy white. Hard maples (black maple and sugar maple) are high quality cabinet and furniture timbers sometimes showing attractive silky, curly or bird's-eye figure. All others are of the "soft maple" category. Several of these provide highly figured burl and crotch wood eagerly sought out by wood crafters. Box elder (Manitoba maple) the lightest maple, S.G. 0.42, sometimes yields wood with beautiful streaks of coral red to orange rust colour.



Alberta

Date of entry into
Confederation September 1, 1905

Arboreal emblem
assented May 1984

lodgepole pine

Pinus contorta var latifolia

pin tordu latifolié



The tree: a conifer growing to 30m and 60 cm diameter (historical maximum height 41 m with a 111 cm diameter) with a long clean slender bole. Leaves, evergreen, needle-like, twisted and stiff in bundles of two, 3-7 cm long, dark green to yellow green, in dense clusters towards the end of the branches. Cones, 3-6 cm long, curved backwards towards the base of the branches, remaining closed for many years with a sharp spine at the tip of each scale. Bark, thin, yellowish brown, somewhat scaly.

The wood: white to yellowish-brown, moderately light, S.G. 0.47, weight 29 pcf, soft and straight grained with uniform texture. Flat-sawn wood often shows a dimpled pattern. Medium strength, seasons readily (shrinkage, 6.8 % tangential and 11.4 % volumetric) takes a good finish and holds paint well. Marketed with white spruce and subalpine fir for general construction in the spruce/pine/fir (SPF) group. Makes excellent heavy construction timber, after pressure treating, for railway ties, poles and mine timbers. Also used for boxes, crates and pulpwood.

Alberta's tree
lodgepole pine

(*Pinus contorta var latifolia*)



Widely distributed throughout western North America, lodgepole pine is the most common and abundant tree in the Rocky Mountains and foothills regions of Alberta. It forms dense, even stands after fire, and integrates with jack pine where the species overlap. The common name is derived from its use by Aboriginal people in constructing their lodges.

British Columbia

Date of entry into
Confederation July 20, 1871

Arboreal emblem
adopted February 1988

western redcedar

Thuja plicata

thuya géant



The tree: a large conifer, normally growing to 60 m tall and 250cm diameter (historical maximum height 84 m by 6.7 m diameter) with a buttressed base and a rapidly tapering bole. Grows all along the west coast of North America to n. California, and in the Rockies to n. Idaho. Leaves, shiny yellow green, 1-2 mm long, scale-like. Foliage, long, drooping and fernlike or stringy. Cones, oblong, 12-18 mm long, tips of the usually four scales, rounded with a very small prickle. Bark, thin, reddish brown, shiny when young, shredded forming narrow flat ridges when older.

The wood: soft, straight grained, very light, S.G. 0.39, weight, 24 pcf. Heartwood pinkish or reddish brown to deep warm brown and highly resistant to decay; thin sapwood, yellowish white. Has a very distinctive aromatic odour. Dries readily with little shrinkage (4.5% tangential and 7.8% volumetric). Exceptionally good working qualities, yielding a smooth satiny finish. Splits readily, takes nails and paint well. Used for shingles, siding, decking, poles, interior finish, boats, canoes, greenhouses, kraft pulp, carving and other craftwork.

British Columbia's tree
western redcedar

(Thuja plicata)



Western redcedar was a mainstay of aboriginal life and culture on Canada's west coast. The "tree of life" provided clothing, shelter, transportation and a medium for aboriginal art and craftwork. The tree's maturity is reached in 350 years, but specimens over 1000 years old have been reported.



Manitoba

Date of entry into
Confederation July 15, 1870

Arboreal emblem
adopted May, 1991

white spruce
Picea glauca
épinette blanche

The tree: a medium sized conifer which develops a handsome conical crown, normally grows to 25 m in height and 60 cm diameter (historical maximum height 40 m with a 10 cm diameter). Leaves, 15-22 mm long needles, four sided, blue green with lines of white dots on all sides, glaucous, unpleasantly pungent when crushed, stiff and pointed but not sharp. Cones, slender, cylindrical, blunt tipped and stalkless, 3-6 cm long; mature open cones crush easily but do not break. Bark, smooth, thin, light grey in youth to darker grey and scaly with age. Newly exposed bark salmon pink to silvery.

The wood: soft and resilient, white in colour, indistinguishable from black and red spruce, straight grained, fine textured and homogeneous. Medium in strength with above average stiffness. Light weight, S.G. 0.42, weight, 26 pcf. Seasons easily with moderate shrinkage in drying (tangential, 6.9%, volumetric, 11.3%). Glues and nails well and holds paint well. An important timber tree, sold in the "SPF" group as construction lumber. Also used for ladder rails, sounding boards for instruments and food containers.

Manitoba's tree
white spruce

(*Picea glauca*)



Growing in every forested region in Canada except the Pacific coast, and often found near the arctic treeline - white spruce is a very hardy tree and is frequently used in forestry and as an ornamental. Where its range overlaps Sitka and Engelmann spruce, natural hybrids occur. Normal life span, 200 years. The pliable roots of White spruce were used to lace the joints of birchbark canoes.



New Brunswick

Date of entry into
Confederation July 1, 1867

Arboreal emblem
adopted May, 1987

balsam fir

Abies balsamea

sapin baumier

The tree: a medium size conifer usually growing to 25 m tall and 70 cm diameter (historical maximum height 49 m with a 132 cm girth) developing a symmetrical, narrow conical crown with branches extending nearly to the ground. Leaves, needle like, flattened, rounded at the tip, arranged in two ranks, 15 - 25 mm long, dark green above, whitish below. Cones, erect, dark purple, barrel shaped, 4 - 10 cm long, breaking up in September leaving a bare axis on the tree for several years. Bark smooth, pale grey with resin blisters on young trees becoming roughened and reddish brown on mature trees.

The wood: light, S.G. 0.39, weight 24 pcf, soft, weak, somewhat brittle, white, homogeneous, odourless, slightly resinous. Straight grained and medium textured, it usually has a fairly large number of smallish knots. Seasons readily with 7.5% tangential and 10.7% volumetric shrinkage. Glues readily, holds paint well but is considered below average in machining properties. Not very decay resistant. Sold as "SPF" lumber, used in construction and particle board and plywood manufacture - large volumes used for pulp.

New Brunswick's tree
balsam fir

(*Abies balsamea*)



Balsam fir ranges from Alberta to Newfoundland and south to Wisconsin and New York. Fairly short lived, it may reach 200 years old. Resin from the blisters on young trees, "Canada balsam", is used in cementing lenses and mounting specimens for observation with a microscope. Balsam fir is favoured for Christmas trees due to its lengthy period of needle freshness.

Newfoundland

Date of entry into
Confederation March 31, 1949
Arboreal emblem
proclaimed May, 1991

black spruce
Picea mariana
épinette noire



The tree: black spruce is a slow growing small to medium sized conifer that normally grows up to 20 m tall and 30 cm diameter (historical maximum height 24 m with a 51 cm diameter) with a straight tapering bole and an irregularly cylindrical crown. Leaves 8-15 mm long, linear, four sided, dull blue green, blunt pointed. Cones are 2-3 cm long, ovoid, purple when young and brown in maturity, persisting up to 30 years in clusters. Bark 6-13 mm thick, grey brown to red brown with an olive green inner layer.

The wood: straight grained and fairly fine textured, nearly white with little or no contrast between heart and sapwood. It is light weight; S.G. 0.48, weight, 30 pcf. Stronger than white spruce, it is classified as medium in strength but above average in stiffness. It seasons easily and shrinkage in drying is moderate - tangential shrinkage is 7.5% and volumetric is 11.1%. It machines well, holds nails well, it is easy to glue and it holds paint well. It is used for lumber and pulpwood, construction plywood, and containers - particularly for food containers since it is almost odourless and tasteless.

Newfoundland's tree
black spruce

(*Picea mariana*)



Black spruce is widespread in Canada and is found growing in every province and territory. It marks the northern limit of tree growth and black spruce trees near this limit are often found to be up to 90 years old with a bole diameter of five cm.



Northwest Territories

Date of entry into
Confederation July 15, 1870

Arboreal emblem
adopted September 9, 1999

tamarack
Larix laricina
mélèze laricin

The tree: a small to medium-sized, upright, deciduous, conifer. It has a straight bole with a narrow pyramidal crown. Trees generally reach 15-25 m in height and 30-40 cm in diameter. The maximum age for tamarack is normally about 150 years. The needles are flattened above, keeled below and 2-5 cm in length, and occur in tufts of 15 to 60. They turn golden yellow and are shed in the fall. Mature, light brown, ovoid cones are 1-2 cm long. The young bark is gray becoming reddish brown and scaly with age

The wood: The coarse textured heartwood is yellowish-brown to russet-brown in colour and the sapwood is whitish and narrow. S.G. is 0.56, weight when air dry is 35 pcf. Because the wood is fairly heavy, durable, and decay-resistant, it is used for posts, poles, mine timbers, and railroad ties. It is used less commonly for lumber, fuel and pulpwood, boxes, crates, and pails. In the Arctic, young tamarack stems are used for dogsled runners, boat ribs, and fish traps; duck and goose decoys are also made from tamarack branches. Aboriginal people also used the roots for cordage, the wood for arrow shafts, and the bark for medicine.

Northwest Territories' tree
tamarack

(*Larix laricina*)



Tamarack is distributed across most of northern North America. It occurs from Newfoundland and Labrador northwest across northern Canada to the northern Yukon Territory, south to northeastern British Columbia and central Alberta, southeast to southern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and northeastern Illinois, and east to New England.



Nova Scotia

Date of entry into
Confederation July 1, 1867

Arboreal emblem
adopted June 1987

red spruce

Picea rubens

épinette rouge

The tree: a medium sized conifer normally growing to 25 m tall and 60 cm in diameter (historical maximum height 49 m with a 145 cm diameter). Open grown trees develop a broadly conical crown extending nearly to the ground - in the forest the crown is somewhat pagoda shaped and restricted to the upper portion of the tree on its long cylindrical bole. Leaves: 10-16 mm long, shiny, linear, 4-sided, yellow green. Cones 3-5 cm long, ovoid-oblong, chestnut brown, falling during the first winter or following spring. Bark to 13 mm thick, irregular greyish to reddish brown scales, inner layers, dull yellow or reddish-brown.

The wood: like most spruces, the wood is strong for its weight, S.G. 0.45, weight, 28 pcf. It is nearly white or cream coloured, moderately long fibred, odourless and slightly resinous. Straight grained, fine textured and above average in stiffness. Seasons easily with moderate shrinkage (7.9% tangential and 11.7% volumetric). Machines and glues well, holds nails and paint satisfactorily. An important commercial species that is highly valued for pulp, lumber, plywood, containers and sounding boards for musical instruments.

Nova Scotia's tree
red spruce

(Picea rubens)



An important timber tree, red spruce grows throughout Canada's Maritime Provinces and stretches as far south as North Carolina in the U.S. It reaches maturity in about 200 years and it lives to 400 years old.



Ontario

Date of entry into
Confederation July 1, 1867

Arboreal emblem
adopted May 1984

eastern white pine

Pinus strobus

pin blanc

The tree: this largest northern conifer normally grows to 30 m tall and 100 cm in diameter (historical maximum height 79 m with a 3.5 m diameter). Recognized by its broadly conical crown and stacked whorls of dark foliated branches that curve up at their ends. Needles, 5 to 15 cm long, straight, slender, flexible, dark blue-green in bundles of five. Cones, 8-20 cm long, narrowly conic, slightly curved, yellowish-green to light brown, pendulous on a short stock. Bark, dark green and smooth when young, soon deeply furrowed, dark brown to black and up to 2-5 cm thick when older.

The wood: the softest and lightest of pines, S.G., 0.34, weight, 21 pcf, with white sapwood and straw brown to light red brown heartwood weathering to a light gray. Straight grained, uniform textured and homogeneous, it seasons readily and uniformly with only 6.3% tangential and 8.2% volumetric shrinkage. It works very easily with hand and machine tools and accepts fasteners, glue and paint well - a most desirable wood. Used extensively for windows, sashes, frames, doors, cabinetry, interior trims, boats, caskets, toys, carvings and other woodenware.

Ontario's tree
eastern white pine

(*Pinus strobus*)



Pinus strobus ranges from western Ontario to the Atlantic provinces and throughout most of north central and the north eastern US. The most valuable timber species in the settlement of North America, magnificent stands of this forest giant once covered vast areas of eastern N.A. It was reserved in colonial times for the masts of Royal Navy ships. Eastern white pine normally ages to 200 years and occasionally lives to 450 years.



Prince Edward Island

Date of entry into
Confederation July 1, 1873

Arboreal emblem
adopted May, 1987

northern red oak

Quercus rubra

chêne rouge

This tree a medium sized deciduous tree, to 25 m tall and 30-90 cm in diameter (historical maximum height of 71 m with a 2.5 m diameter) with a short, massive trunk and an extensive crown in the open- tall columnar bole and small rounded head in the forest; symmetrical and beautifully coloured in the fall. Leaves 10-20 cm long by 10-13 cm wide, oblong, with seven to 11 toothed lobes. Fruit, a single nut (acorn) 12-25 mm long. Bark, brown to black, broken to wide flat ridges.

The wood: coarse grained, light red-brown; heavy, S.G. 0.69, weight, 43 pcf. Ring porous with large conspicuous pores, and broad conspicuous rays on the radial surface, which give the tangential surface the characteristic mottled look. Hard and strong with high impact resistance. Seasons slowly with moderate shrinkage - 6.7% tangential and 12.0% volumetric shrinkage). Works fairly easily, machines well and holds nails and screws well but should be pre-drilled. Glues well and has good bending properties. A highly desired cabinet, decorative plywood and millwork wood widely used for home furnishing, quality furniture and craftwork.

Prince Edward Island's tree
northern red oak

(*Quercus rubra*)



Northern red oak is the most important and widespread of northern oaks, growing in all of eastern North America except Newfoundland and Labrador and Florida. A desirable street and shade tree and a most important timber species. Normally grows to 150 years old.



Quebec

Date of entry into
Confederation July 1, 1867

Arboreal emblem
adopted November 1993

yellow birch
Betula alleghaniensis
bouleau jaune

The tree: a medium sized hardwood tree normally growing up to 25 m tall and 60 cm diameter (historical maximum height 35 m with a 137 cm diameter). Irregularly rounded crown and well formed bole. Leaves doubly serrate, 8-11 cm long and 3-5 cm wide, ovate to oblong, acute apex, dark green above, pale yellow green below. Fruit, an ovoid, short stalked and erect catkin. Bark, yellowish golden grey to bronze, peels horizontally into thin papery strips and breaks into reddish brown fissures and plates in maturity.

The wood: diffuse porous heartwood, golden-brown to light reddish-brown. Hard, often wavy grained, strong and heavy, S.G. 0.67, weight, 42 pcf, fine uniform texture and has high impact resistance. Seasons slowly with little degrade but relatively high shrinkage (7.1% tangential and 15.1% volumetric). Has good nail and screw holding characteristics and split resistance. A fairly good bending wood but requires some care in gluing. Not very resistant to decay. Used extensively for furniture, flooring, doors, and cabinetwork and is in demand for veneers and plywood.

Quebec tree
yellow birch

(*Betula alleghaniensis*)



An important source of hardwood lumber for eastern Canada, yellow birch ranges from the southeast corner of Manitoba to and throughout the Atlantic provinces and the northeast of the United States. The papery bark curls are highly flammable, even when wet. The tree typically matures in 150 years and can live up to 300 years.



Saskatchewan

Date of entry into
Confederation September 1, 1905

Arboreal Emblem
assented to, June, 1988

white birch

Betula papyrifera

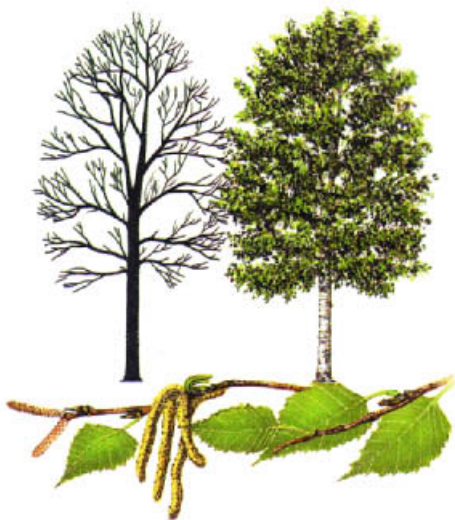
bouleau à papier

The tree: a medium sized deciduous tree growing to 25 m tall and 40 cm in diameter (historical maximum height 37 m with a 183 cm diameter) with a pyramidal or later, irregularly rounded, open crown. Leaves, ovate to oval, 5-10 cm long by 4-5 cm wide, margin, coarsely double serrate; dull dark green above, pale yellowish green below, turning light yellow in the fall. Fruit, a seed catkin 3-5 cm long held erect. Bark, dark brown at first, turning to a chalky white, separating into thin papery strips, and turning blackish and fissured near the base of old trees.

The wood: diffuse porous, creamy white with a pale brown core; moderately heavy, S.G., 0.64, weight, 40 pcf, fine and uniform textured with no odour. Seasons well with relatively low shrinkage, takes glue satisfactorily. Has good machining properties, takes a good finish, holds nails and screws well. Not very resistant to decay. Used for a variety of applications - veneer, plywood, interior finish, furniture, woodenware, toys, dowels, pallets and crates, also for pulpwood. The tough pliable bark has long been used for making canoes and ornaments.

Saskatchewan's tree
white birch

(*Betula papyrifera*)



The most widely distributed of native birches, white birch (paper birch, canoe birch) grows in every region of Canada and most of the northern tier states of the US. It is a popular ornamental tree and a valued source of hardwood timber. In thin curls, the bark makes excellent fire starter, and the wood is a premium firewood.



Yukon

Date of entry into
Confederation June 13, 1898

Arboreal emblem
adopted June, 2001

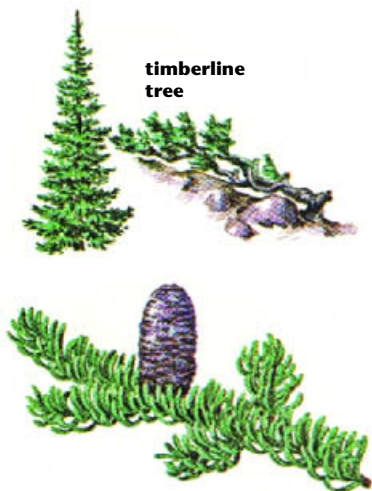
subalpine fir
Abies lasiocarpa
sapin subalpin

The tree: a medium size conifer growing to 30 m tall and 75 cm in diameter. Normal longevity is 200 years. The trunk is cylindrical, the branches, short and drooping and the narrow crown is dense and spire like. The erect needles are 2.5 - 4 cm long, round or notch tipped and grey-green to light blue green with lines of white dots on the lower surface. The erect, barrel shaped, grey-brown to deep purple seed cones are 4-10 cm long. The young bark is smooth grey with resin blisters becoming irregular and scaly with age.

The wood: light-weight, soft, tasteless and odorless. No distinct heartwood/sapwood differentiation is evident. S.G. is reported at .32; dry weight is 20 pcf. The wood is low in bending and compressive strength. It is easy to work, glues well, and holds nails and screws fairly well. The wood is primarily used for products such as lumber for home construction, for prefabricated wood products, poles and pilings (requiring preservatives); also for boxes, crates, milled shapes, doors, frames, food containers and pulp.

Yukon's tree
subalpine fir

(*Abies lasiocarpa*)



**timberline
tree**

Subalpine fir is the most widely distributed fir in North America. It occurs chiefly in mountainous areas from the Yukon interior near tree line and along the coast of southeastern Alaska south through western Alberta and British Columbia to southern Colorado and scattered mountain ranges of the US southwest.

Official Trees in Canada

What are they?

Canadian provinces have long chosen symbols to represent various elements of the natural world in each province. Each of Canada's ten provinces, the northern territories and Canada itself has selected floral emblem, an arboreal emblem and/or other emblems from nature as official symbols. Arboreal emblems are specific tree species chosen to represent the beauty, strength and majesty of Canada's forests.

Why are they Chosen?

Each area of Canada is blessed with a variety of trees and shrubs suited to growth and survival in the environment and climate of the area. Provinces choose species representative of their flora to celebrate this natural bounty. They represent the most common or typical species as part of the natural and cultural heritage existent in each area and as part of the important forest industries contributing to their economic prosperity.

How are they Chosen?

Often, official emblems are the result of public competitions. School children, nature conservancies or groups most interested in the preservation of the environment are consulted in the process of selecting such emblems. In the case of Canada's arboreal emblem, many Canadians, including those in the forest sector, have long urged the government of Canada to choose the maple as Canada's tree. On April 25, 1996, that choice was made and Canadians may now proudly refer to the generic maple tree as Canada's official arboreal emblem.

INTERNATIONAL WOOD COLLECTORS SOCIETY

What is the IWCS?

Founded in 1947, IWCS is a non-profit Society devoted to advancing information on wood. This is accomplished through the publication of a monthly journal, "***World of Wood***", and via meetings on the local, national and international levels.

Who Belongs to IWCS?

Botanists, dendrologists and other scientists, technologists, woodworkers, wood dealers, wood collectors, woodcrafters, artisans, hobbyists - in short, anyone with an interest in discovering more about nature's wonder material - wood! Members in over thirty-five countries enjoy fellowship and contacts with wood lovers worldwide.

***World of Wood* - Journal of the IWCS**

This monthly journal is devoted to information on correctly identifying and naming wood specimens, wood collecting and using wood in creative crafts. It features articles from around the world on trees, wood, woodcrafts and woodcrafters and provides a forum for the exchange of wood and wood samples among members.

Membership Information

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The Tree Canada Foundation is a not-for-profit, charitable organization established in 1992. Under the direction of a member volunteer Board of Directors, the Foundation provides education, technical assistance, resources and financial support through working partnerships to encourage Canadians to plant and care for trees in an effort to help reduce the harmful effects of carbon dioxide emissions. The foundation is a leader in promoting the value of urban forests in Canada.



Tree Canada Foundation
www.tcf-fca.ca

Our Vision

We see a future in which Canadians appreciate and understand the economic and environmental value of trees and, as a result, get personally involved in the planting and care of trees in communities across the country.

Trees clearly do their part. They:

- purify the air we breathe, acting as “the lungs of the earth”;
- help reduce the effects of global warming by “filtering” carbon dioxide emissions;
- improve the aesthetics of urban areas, vacant lands and recreational sites;
- protect farms and watersheds against wind damage and soil erosion;
- create and enhance wildlife habitats; and
- conserve energy by reducing heating and cooling costs in residential areas.

In order to realize our vision, the Foundation has the following objectives:

- Facilitate the planting and care of trees throughout urban and rural Canada;
- Educate Canadians about the benefits of planting and caring for trees;
- Assist interested parties in implementing a wide range of self-sustaining tree planting and educational initiatives;
- Encourage corporations, communities and individuals to participate in the program.



IWCS
Founded in 1947

**IWCS is a non-profit society devoted to
advancing information on wood.**

**Publication of this booklet was made
possible through the assistance of:**



**Natural Resources
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