

# Conifers

by Ed Burke, Owner and Landscape Designer, Rocky Dale Gardens

Commonly referred to as “evergreens”, conifers are simply woody plants with needle or scale-like leaves that bear cones. Not all conifers are evergreen (Larch), and not all evergreens are conifers (Rhododendrons).

Rocky Dale is well known for its collection of conifers in the garden as well as our plant offerings in the nursery. There’s a conifer for just about every soil, light and moisture condition and they come in quite an array of colors and growth rates.

Using conifers in a woody or perennial border will add interest throughout the year; they look gorgeous in snow. Adrian Bloom, who will be visiting VT the end of this month, has written extensively about the use of conifers for all-season interest. You can refer to his books, “Gardening with Conifers” and “The Year-Round Garden”, and also hear him speak at the Davis Center at UVM in Burlington on Sept 28<sup>th</sup>. (See below)

In this bulletin, I’d like to highlight some lesser-known conifers that take on a yellow to gold color in fall and maintain that color through the winter. Two of these were selected by the well-known and respected Vermont nurseryman, Greg Williams.

Gold conifers look great combined with blue and dark green conifers. They offer a bright and unique character to the winter garden.

## PINUS DENSIFLORA ‘RED O.D. BURKE’

This Japanese Red Pine has beautiful green needles banded with white. It’s listed as compact, growing 6 feet tall by 4 feet wide in ten years. It prefers sun and a well-drained soil. While Japanese Red Pines are listed as hardy to Zone 5, some growers list this selection as hardier. It should be fine in the Champlain Valley, but may suffer winter burn in very exposed sites. We have an older specimen in our gardens that seems to do fine, only having occasional winter burn.

## PINUS STROBUS ‘LOUIE’

This white pine was discovered by Greg Williams, right here in Vermont. It has very bright yellow foliage that intensifies over the winter months. It’s very hardy and will resist winter burn once established. A moderate grower, it will reach 6-8 feet in ten years. Hard to find and much sought after.

## PINUS SYLVESTRIS ‘GOLD COIN’

This Scot’s Pine is dwarf with an upright pyramidal form growing 4 feet tall by 2 feet wide in ten years. “Gold Coin” has dense foliage that is light green in summer and turns the most magnificent gold in winter. It is very hardy, requiring full sun and moist well-drained soil.

## PINUS SYLVESTRIS ‘AUREA’

This Scot’s Pine grows 6-12 feet in ten years forming a pyramidal shape. Beautiful gold color forms in fall and remains through winter. Perfectly hardy to Zone 3.

## PICEA ABIES ‘VERMONT GOLD’

Another introduction by Vermonter, Greg Williams, this Norway Spruce grows prostrate with a similar habit to *Picea abies* ‘Repens’, wide-spreading and flat-topped. It’s a dwarf, growing 3-6 feet in ten years. It maintains its gold color throughout the summer.

## PICEA OMORIKA ‘AUREA’

This is a large Serbian Spruce that will grow up to 12 feet in ten years. Yellow over blue-green needles on slightly weeping branches gives it a unique color and texture. Hardy to Zone 3 requiring full sun.

## PICEA MARIANA ‘AUREOVARIEGATA’

This narrow-growing Black Spruce has bluish-green foliage tipped with yellow- especially pronounced in the winter and spring, but apparent throughout summer as well. It’s hardy to Zone 3 and requires full sun. It will grow 6-12 feet in ten years. Spectacular!

## ABIES CONCOLOR ‘WINTERGOLD’

A White Fir with striking gold foliage in winter. It’s slow growing and takes time to form a good leader. Grows 6 to 10 feet in ten years and is hardy to Zone 4.

## ABIES KOREANA ‘AUREA’

Korean Fir looks a lot like a very lush Balsam Fir. This selection has bright lemon-yellow needles with silver undersides, putting on its best color fall through spring. In addition, it has the incredible purple cones this genus is known for. Grows into a large tree in time. Best color in full sun, but may winter-burn in exposed sites.

## TAXUS CUSPIDATA ‘GOLDEN TREASURE’

For those of you who don’t have a deer problem and would like a conifer selection for a shady spot, consider the golden form of Yew. ‘Golden Treasure’ gets 3-6 feet in ten years and has a nice spreading form. The gold foliage is resistant to winter burn.

## TAXUS CUSPIDATA ‘NANA AURESCENS’

Another gold foliated yew is *Taxus cuspidata* ‘Nana Aureaescens’, again, a dwarf plant like ‘Golden Treasure’- but lower growing. This Yew needs protection from winter sun and wind.

These are just a few of the wonderful conifers with interesting colored foliage. In the next bulletin, we’ll talk about conifers with interesting bluish foliage.



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in this issue:



*Pinus densiflora*  
‘Red O.D. Burke’  
.....



*Pinus strobus*  
‘Louie’  
.....



*Pinus sylvestris*  
‘Gold Coin’  
.....



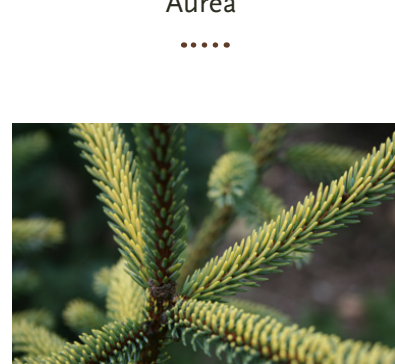
*Pinus sylvestris*  
‘Aurea’  
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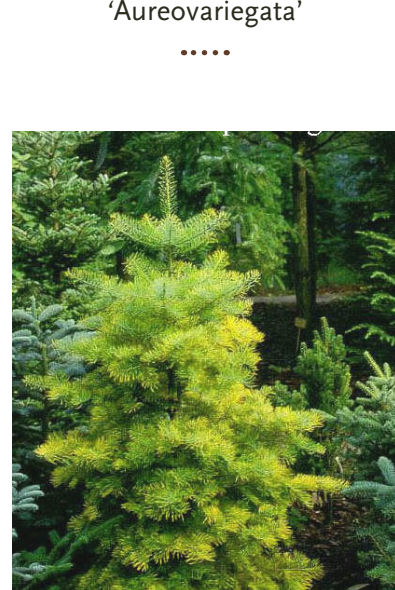
*Picea abies*  
‘Vermont Gold’  
.....



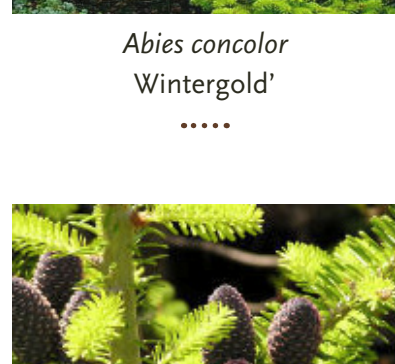
*Picea omorika*  
‘Aurea’  
.....



*Picea mariana*  
‘Aureovariegata’  
.....



*Abies concolor*  
‘Wintergold’  
.....



*Abies koreana*  
‘Aurea’  
.....



*Abies koreana*  
‘Aurea’  
.....



*Taxus cuspidata*  
‘Golden Treasure’  
.....



*Taxus cuspidata*  
‘Nana Aureaescens’  
.....

Green Works

A Day and Evening with

Adrian Bloom

Tuesday, September 28<sup>th</sup> 2010

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