True Firs

Genus Characteristics

Fruit: Barrel-shaped cones that sit vertically on branches. Cones mature in top third of trees and disintegrate when mature. Cones may vary in color.

Abies concolor

Abies koreana

Leaves: Needles are blunt at tips and not as sharp as spruces ("friendly firs"). Needles and twigs are fragrant when crushed. Leaf scars on twigs are flat to branch and look like round suction cups.

Abies spp.

Abies grandis

Bark: Fir bark is usually thin and smooth and can furrow with age. It lacks the deep grooves of Douglas-firs and the plates of spruce bark. Sometimes resin blisters are present.

Abies lasiocarpa

Abies grandis

Form: True firs are typically large-form trees. Although small and dwarf cultivars exist, straight species seen in Portland tend to mature to around 100 ft. Firs are usually conical. Crown shape can vary by species.

Abies concolor

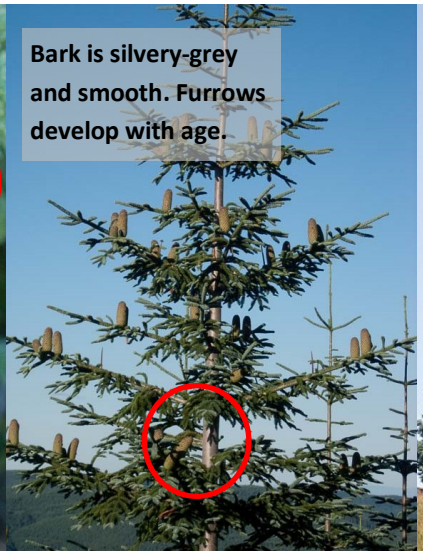
Abies nordmanniana

Abies procera

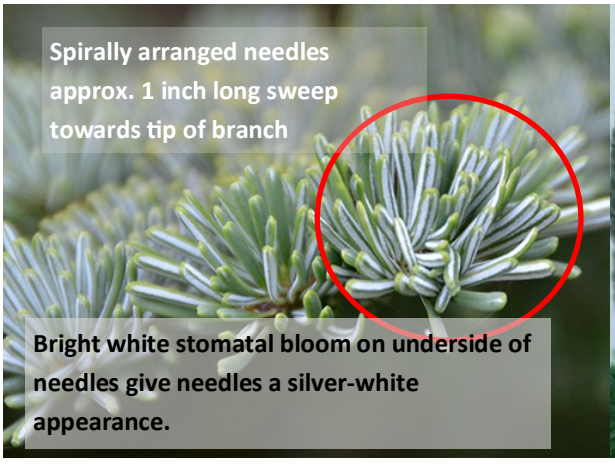
True Firs

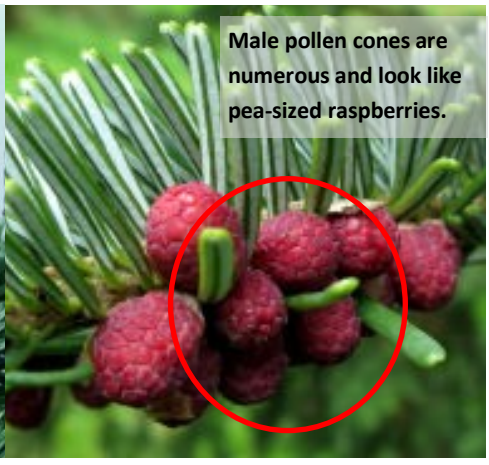
Abies grandis—Grand fir

Abies procera—Noble fir



Abies amabilis—Pacific silver fir





Abies concolor—White fir

Needles are 2-3 inches long, the longest of the commonly seen firs. Needles curve up and out and are blue-green.

Grey bark furrows with age. Furrows are reddish-brown.

Many firs can look similar and there is a lot of variability between trees. This guide highlights species we know are in parks; however there are many species of true firs and we could find species not listed in this manual. Cones disintegrate on trees and are not always visible. If you are unsure, take a sample! If Urban Forestry staff is stumped, we'll send it to the experts at Hoyt Arboretum.