



Tamarack or Eastern Larch

Tamarack

Ojibway: muckigwatig

The Tamarack is Ontario's only native deciduous conifer, that is, it loses its needles every autumn just like hardwood tree species. Tamarack is one of the last trees to drop their foliage each autumn after the needles have turned a blaze of gold. In the spring the needles flush late into a soft bright green mass of foliage. Some needles are produced singly while others flush in tufts of 10-25 per tuft.

The rough branches host insects that migratory birds feed on. In Laurier Woods C.A. during the growing season stop and look for birds in the tamaracks just off the main trail at the Brule St entrance and further in along the main trail near the remains of an old house and sand pit. You will see or hear birds gleaning insects in these trees.

The Ojibway name for the tree translates to "swamp tree" where tamarack tends to be most abundant. Amongst various uses Indigenous people in Ontario use the flexible branches to make goose decoys to help in hunting geese.

In the past tamaracks grew in association with many upland species but as a result of an invasive insect, the European sawfly, the diversity of tree associations with tamarack was reduced and has not recovered. The wood of tamarack is rot resistant and so utilized where this property can be of benefit such as fence posts where a portion of the post is in contact with the wet soil. Bend a branch of the tamarack and you will see how flexible the wood is. This property has been used where rot resistance plus a tough flexible wood was needed such as making keels of boats and snowshoes.

Tamarack grows best under full sun and is able to withstand extreme cold, as low as -65° C. These adaptations make tamarack one of few tree species found growing in Canada's far north.