

Coniferous Forest Fact Sheet



Coniferous forests (also known as Taiga or Boreal forests) are dominated by pine trees with needle-shaped leaves. They are evergreen, have shallow root systems and usually bear cones. The needle-like leaves reduce water loss.

Coniferous trees are tolerant of a wide range of soils and climates. They can grow in thin, nutrient-poor and acidic soils common in the northern latitudes. The branches of these conical shaped coniferous trees are flexible and let snow slide off.

Location: Coniferous forests are between 50° and 60° of latitude north of the Equator. They occur in a broad belt, just to the south of the Tundra, across northern Europe, Asia and North America. Large areas of coniferous forest are found in Scandinavia, Alaska and Canada. Countries with large areas of coniferous forests include Sweden, Finland, Norway, Russia, Japan, Canada and the United States of America.

Climate: Coniferous forests grow in climates that have long snowy winters with temperatures averaging -20°C . Summers are warm and often humid with temperatures averaging 18°C . Low through to quite high levels of annual rainfall/snow (300–900mm) are possible depending on location.

Plants: The pines that dominate coniferous forests are very hardy species. They can withstand the extreme weather conditions in both the summer and winter. Other trees found in these forests include spruces, larches and birches.

Animals: Coniferous forests provide a home for many different insects, birds and mammals. Insect species include mosquitoes, ants, spruce bark beetles and aspen leaf miners. Birdlife includes woodpeckers, grouse, hawks and owls. Mammal species include bears, caribou, foxes, lynx, minks, moose, reindeer, squirrels and wolves.