

Of all the wonders of nature, a tree in summer is perhaps the most remarkable; with the possible exception of a moose singing "Embraceable You" in spats.


Woody Allen

A close-up, slightly blurred background of green conifer needles, likely from a spruce or fir tree, filling the entire frame. The needles are arranged in a dense, overlapping pattern, with some showing small, brownish, pointed structures at their bases.

# Conifers

Mickey Eisenberg

Dave Shema



**Hundreds of birds  
Thousands of flowers  
But only 18 conifers!**

# Conifers: Only 18

Pines (4)	Playing in the
Firs (5)	Forest
Spruces (2)	Should
Hemlocks (2)	Help
Yew (1)	You
Larches (2)	Learn
Cedars (2)	Conifers

The Wall Street Journal bestseller — now revised and updated!

# Conifers Cascade Conifers

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**Paul Bunyan**





Q: How do trees get on the internet?

A: They log on.

# Identification

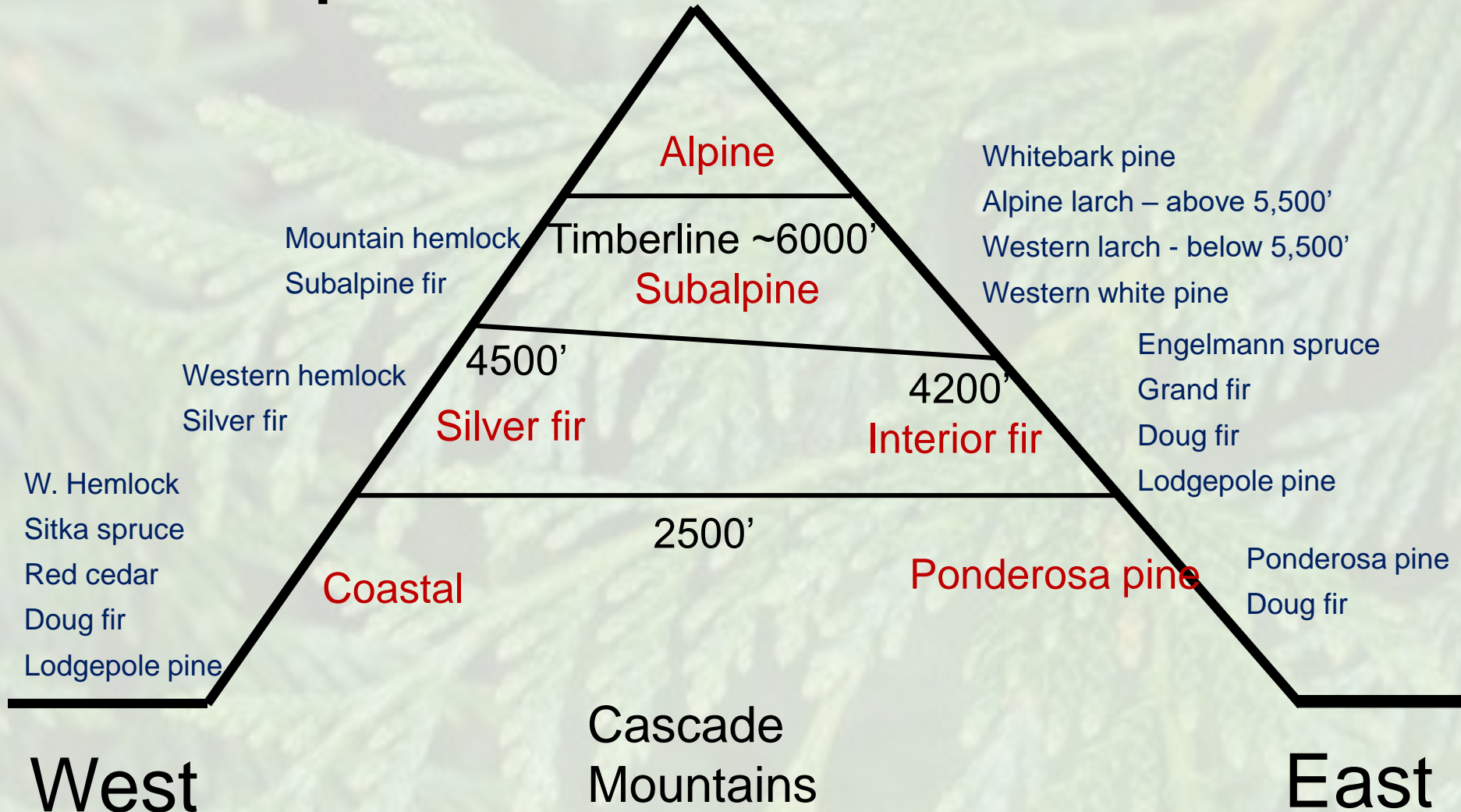
Emphasis on:

- Needles
- Cones
- Appearance
- Elevation & location

Not much emphasis on bark or size of tree

Conifers may try to trick you, especially in sunny areas

# Location: zones and predominant trees





Key

Needles

Scales

Clustered

Not clustered

Pines (4)

Spruces (2)

Cedars (2)

Larches (2)

Hemlocks (2)

Firs (5)

Yew (1)

A close-up photograph of cedar branches, showing the characteristic scale-like structure of the leaves. The branches are densely packed with small, overlapping scales, giving them a soft, feathery appearance. The color is a vibrant green, and the lighting highlights the texture of the scales.

# Scales: Cedars (2)

# Western Red Cedar

- Smooth scales when rubbed
- Reddish bark, rosebud cones
- Looks “happy”, with uplifting branches – **The “Happy” Cedar**
- Generally below 4000’

# Western Red Cedar



# Alaska Yellow Cedar

Other names are Alaska cedar,  
Nootka cypress

- Prickly when rubbed
- Droopy branches
- Looks sad – **The “Sad” Cedar**
- West of Cascade crest
- Above 3,000’



Alaska yellow cedar



Q: Why didn't the tree want  
to play checkers?

A: Because it was a chess-nut!

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Cedars (2)

Larches (2)

Hemlocks (2)

Firs (5)

Yew (1)



# Needles

Clustered

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Yew (1)



**Needles: Clustered**

**Pines (4)**

**Larches (2)**

# Lodgepole Pine

Lightweight wood and easy to peel bark made it preferred for tepees and log cabins.

Costal relative is known as Shore pine or Contorta (Twisted) pine.

- **2 needles**
- Needles are 1-3"
- Above 3,000 in the mountains

Lodgepole pine



# Ponderosa Pine

Named by David Douglas for its ponderous size

- East of crest only
- Bark can look like jigsaw puzzle and may smell like vanilla or butterscotch
- **3 long needles**, 5-10" in length
- Up to 5,000'



Ponderosa pine

Ponderosa pine







# Western White Pine

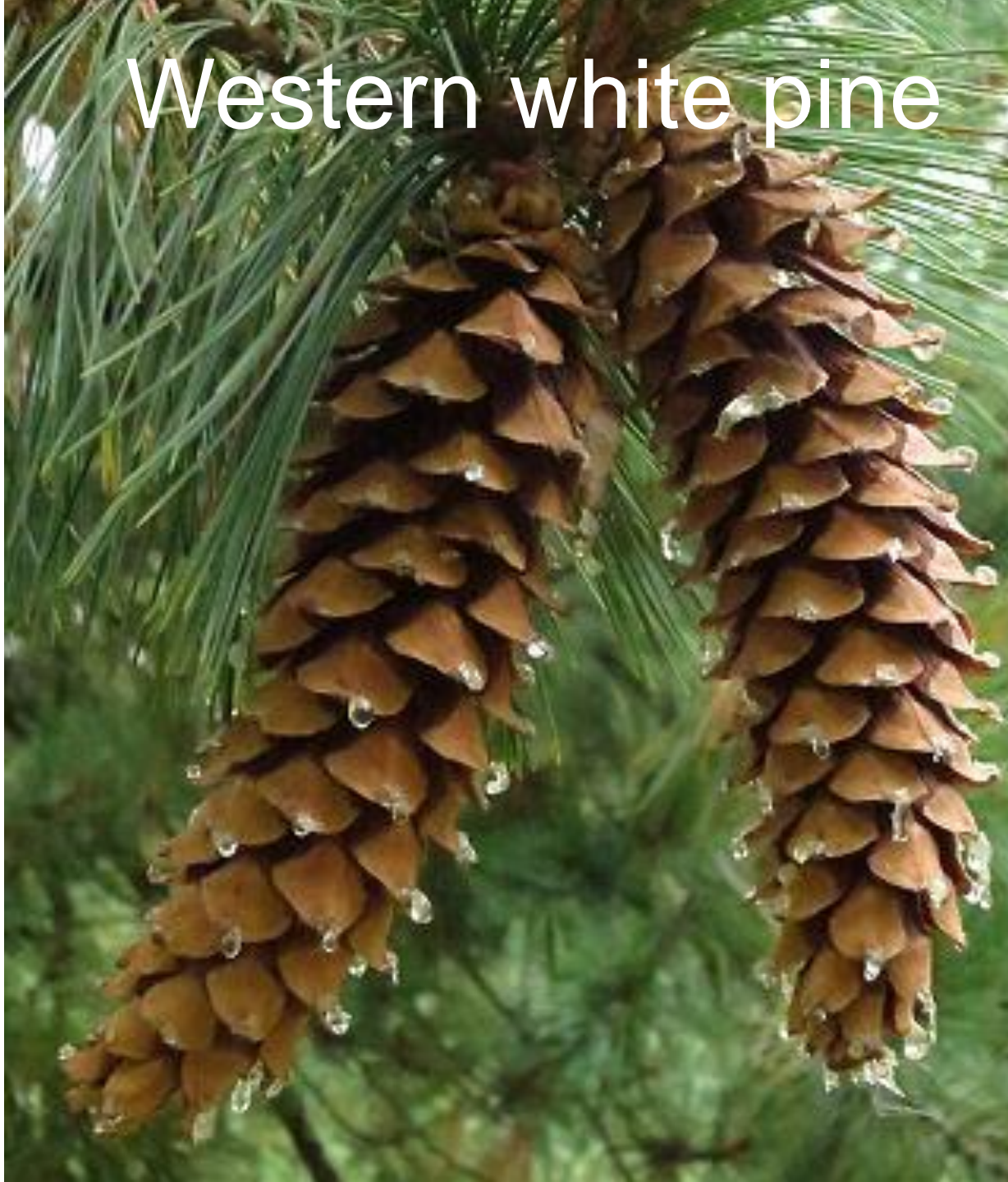
Largest cones in Washington

- 5 needles
- Long cones 6-10" in length, often with a banana-like curve
- 3,000-5,000'

Western white pine



# Western white pine



# Whitebark Pine

Symbiotic relationship with the bird  
Clark's Nutcracker.

- **5 needles**, tightly bundled,  
1-3" in length
- Cones 2-3" but rarely seen
- 5000'+, **at timberline**

Whitebark pine



Whitebark pine



# Western Larch

Yellow needles in fall

- 3-sided needles in bundles of 15-25, > 2" long
- **Up to 6,000'**, central/south Cascades, and NE corner of Washington, Idaho
- Grows tall and straight

# Western larch





# Alpine Larch

Yellow needles in fall

- 4 sided, clustered needles 20-40, 1-2” long
- 5500+, at timberline, central/north Cascades
- Grows where it is too cold, rocky, snowy, windy, for other conifers



**Alpine larch**

# Needles

Clustered

Pines (4)

Larches (2)

Not clustered

Spruces (2)

Hemlocks (2)

Firs (5)

Yew (1)

A close-up photograph of evergreen tree branches, likely spruce or fir, showing dense green needles and small, developing cones. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

**Needles: Not Clustered**

**Spruces (2)**

**Hemlocks (2)**

**Firs (5) – Upright cones**

**Yew (1)**

# Sitka Spruce

- **Spikey**, flat, needles (won't "roll")
- Paper thin, 3" cones
- **Coast** and Puget Sound lowlands, within reach of ocean fog. (< 700')



Sitka spruce

# Engelmann Spruce

- Needles are less spikey and square-shaped (will roll between fingers)
- Cones are paper thin, 3"
- Cascades & Eastern Washington mountains
- 3,000-6,000 feet



Engelmann spruce



# Western Hemlock

Washington State tree

- Droopy crown
- **Tiny cones** < 1" in length
- Short flat needles of 3 lengths, mostly flattened on twig.
- Below 4,000'

# Western hemlock



# Mountain Hemlock

- Droopy crown
- Short flat needles of two lengths
- 2" cones.
- Needles radiate from all sides of twig like a bottle brush.
- The **“Sparkle” Hemlock**
- 4,000+ to timberline

A close-up photograph of a Mountain hemlock branch. The branch is covered in dense, vibrant green needles that are arranged in a regular, overlapping pattern. The needles are small and pointed. The background is dark and out of focus, showing more of the tree's structure.

Mountain hemlock

# Pacific Silver Fir

- **Side-by-side** needles with row down spine (**ski jumpers**)
- 3-6" cones, upright, green to Purple
- Underside of needle is pale (silver)
- Above 3,000'



Silver fir

Silver fir



# Grand Fir

Flat branches used for bedding  
by Lewis and Clark

- **Needles lie in flattened rows**, bare twig. 3 needle lengths.
- Dark, shiny green needles have grapefruit smell & taste.
- Upright cones fall apart at maturity
- Up to 5,000'



Grand fir



# Subalpine Fir

- Needles curve to densely crowd top of twig
- Upright, purple-to-gray, cones
- Tree has **steepled appearance**
- 4,000' to timberline

# Subalpine fir





# Noble Fir

Named by Douglas for its beauty and majesty

- Blue-green needles, bent like hockey sticks.
- **Whiskery bracts** on upright cones, at tree-top, 4-6" in length
- Mostly south of Rainier
- Above 2,000'



Noble fir

Noble fir



# Douglas Fir

Not a fir, not a hemlock

- Needles stick out in all directions but can lie flat.
- Mouse tail bracts on cones
- Up to 5,000'
- When in doubt of conifer ID, **guess Douglas Fir** – correct 80% of time



Douglas fir



# Pacific Yew (bush)

- **Side-by-side** short, flat, needles: non-prickly, glossy dark green top
- No cones - is a hardwood
- Red aril (seed coat) tastes like mild cherry Jello. Seed is poisonous!
- Below 5,000' in wet shady areas



Yew



Yew

Yew





**Q: Where does a tree like to  
spend the night?**

**A: In a seedy motel**



**Q: What is a tree's least favorite month?**

**A: Sep-timber**

# Quiz Time

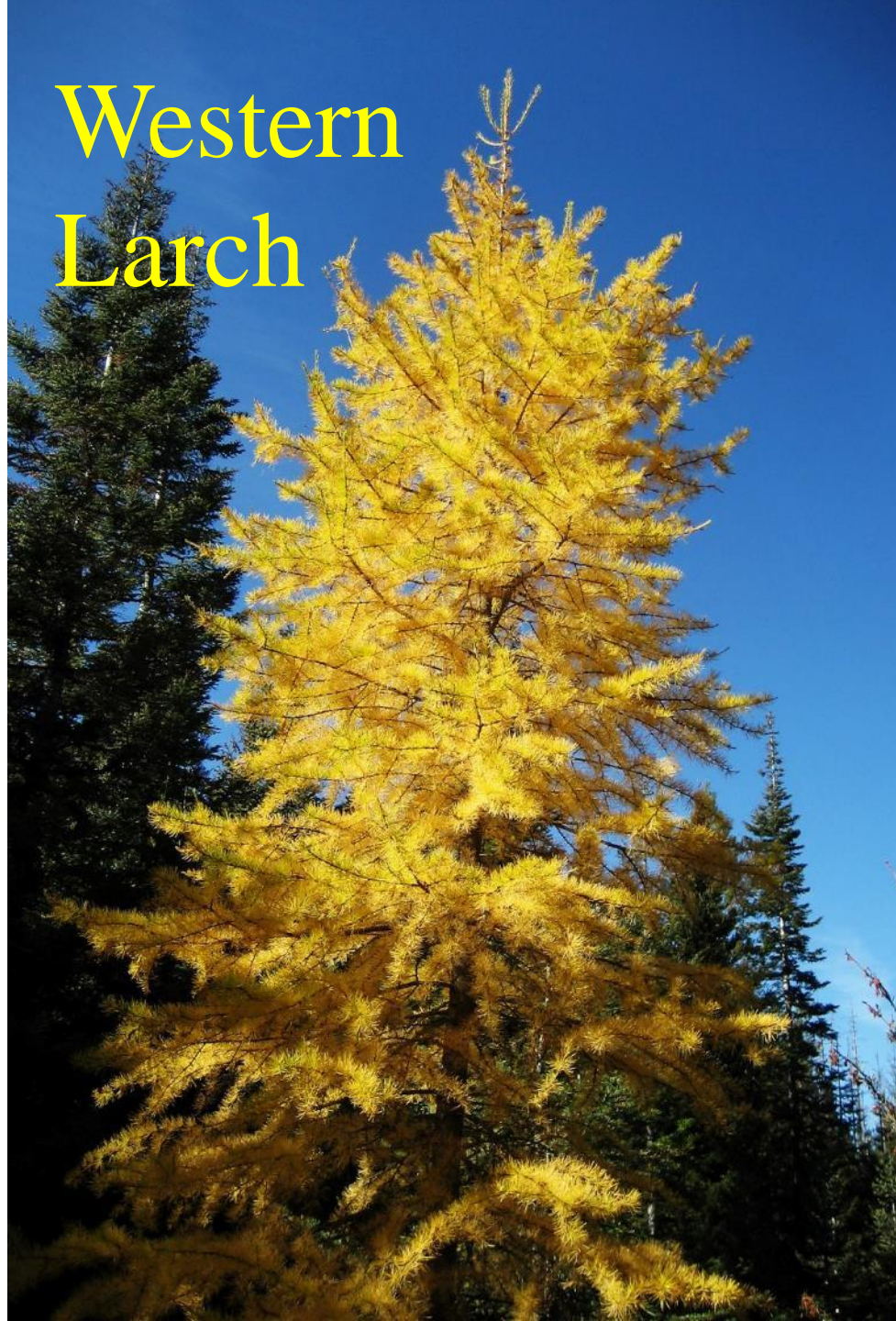




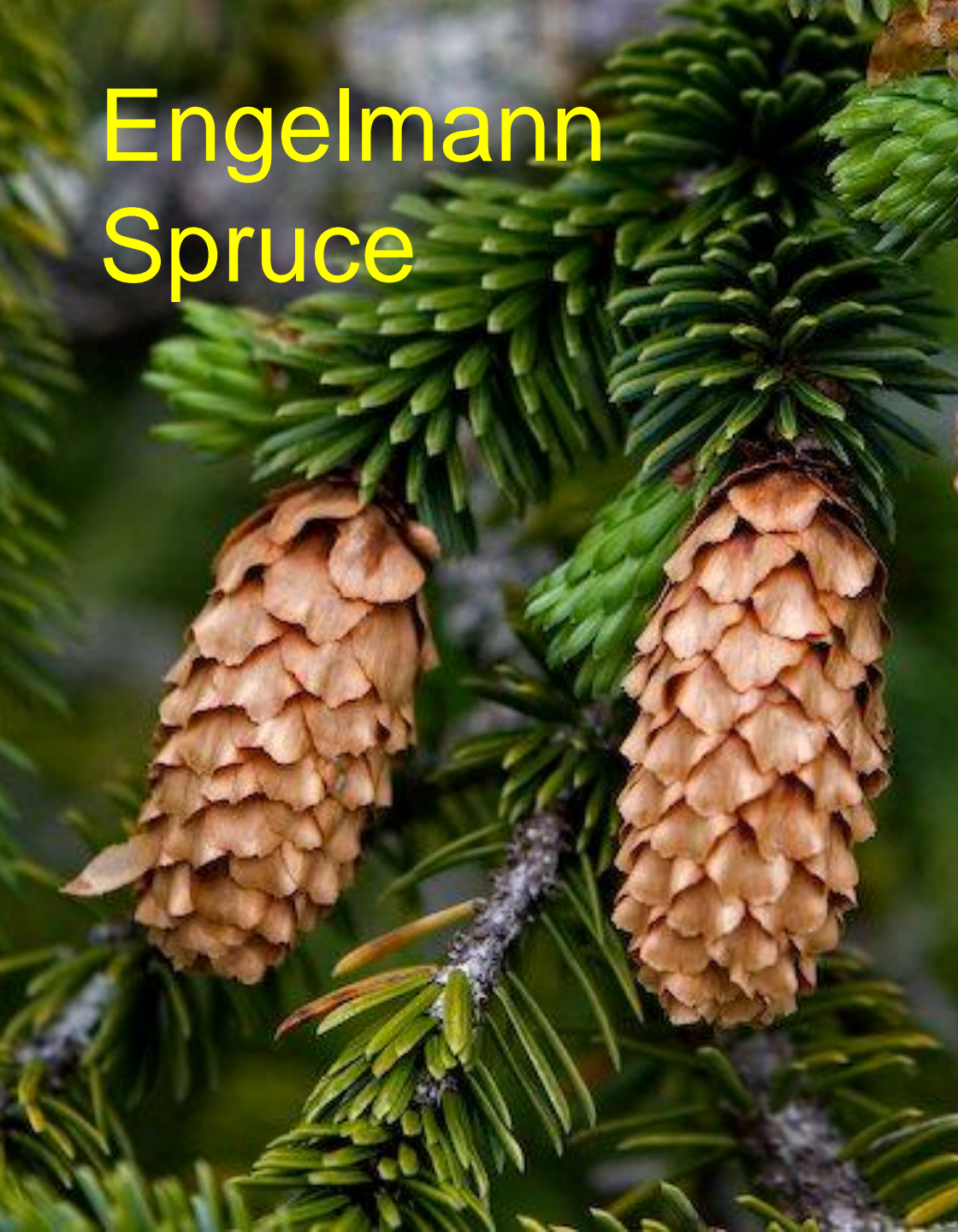


Ponderosa  
Pine

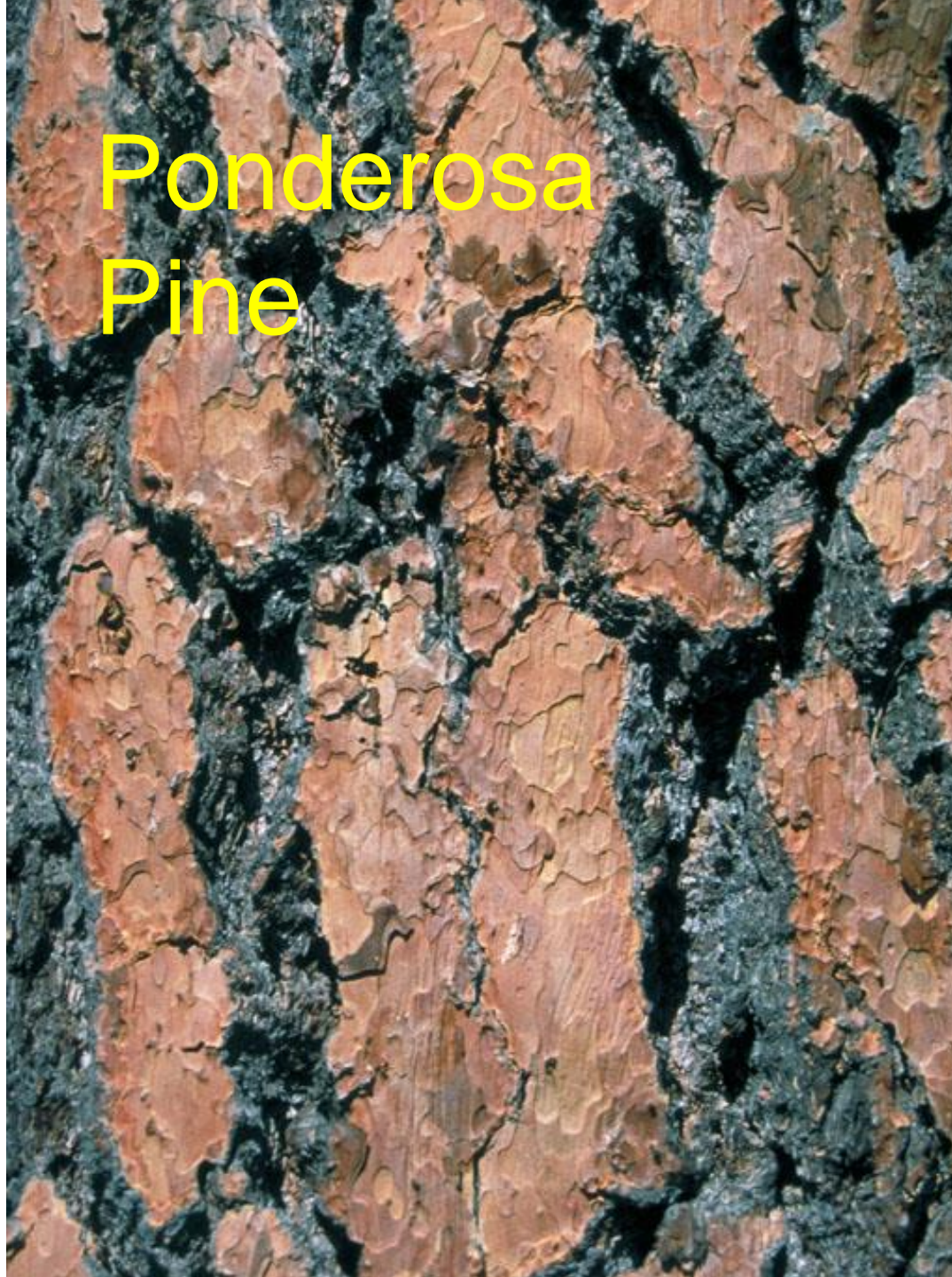
# Western Larch



# Engelmann Spruce



# Ponderosa Pine



# Whitebark Pine

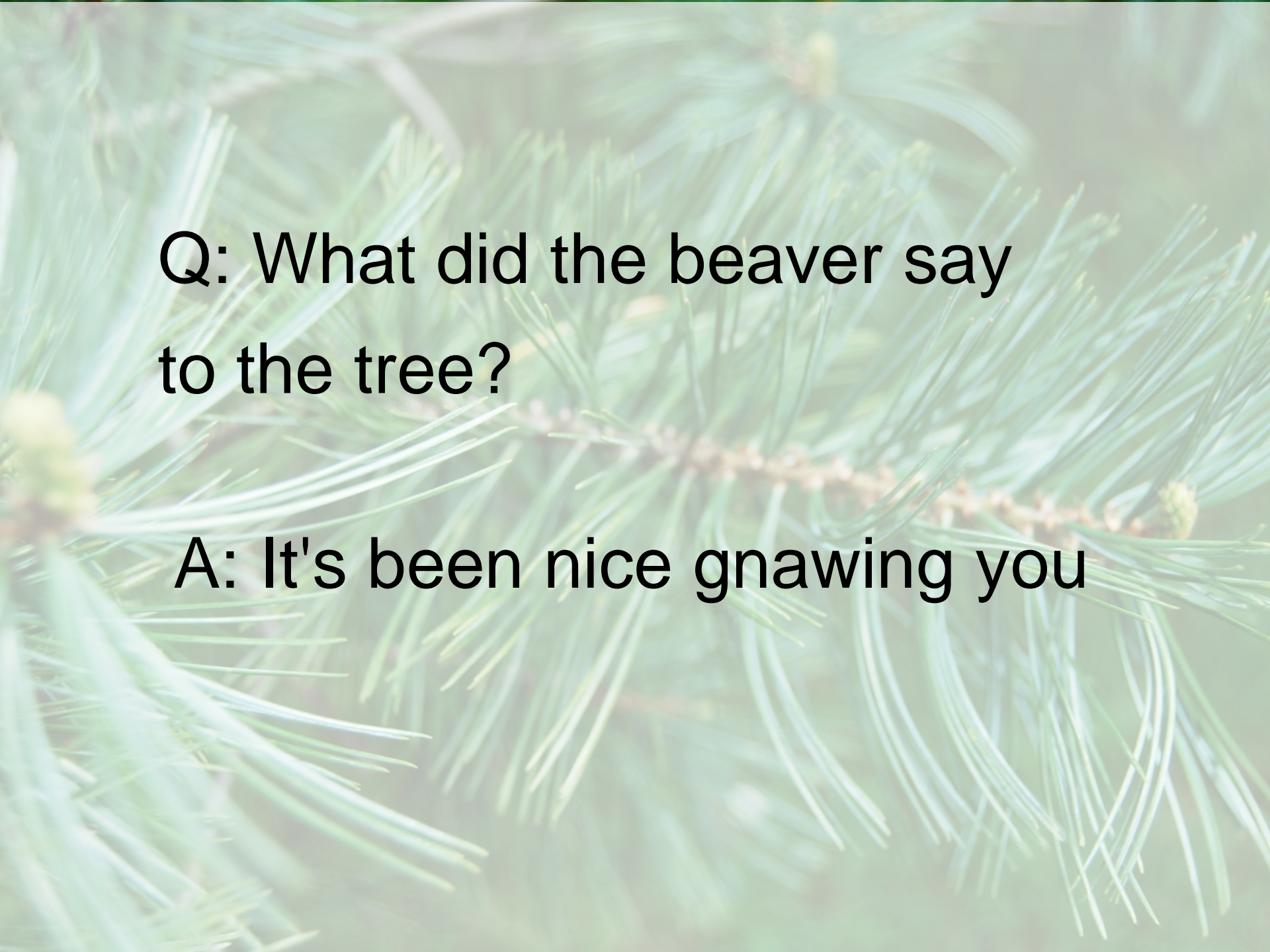


# Douglas Fir



# Subalpine Fir



A close-up photograph of a pine branch with green needles and a small, developing pine cone. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

**Q: What did the beaver say  
to the tree?**

**A: It's been nice gnawing you**



A close-up photograph of a pine branch with vibrant green needles and small, developing cones. The background is softly blurred, creating a sense of depth. The text is overlaid on the image in a red, serif font.

On-line reference –  
[nwconifers.com](http://nwconifers.com)

Excellent conifer hike – Crystal  
Peak, Mt Rainier NP

Time fir me to leaf yew

18 Cascade Conifers	Description	Elevation	Cones	Needles	Stomata	Other
Douglas Fir	Bottle brush	Up to 4500	3-4 in, 3 pt bracts	1 in, flat, pointy tip	2 bottom	Not true fir
Western Hemlock	Droopy top	Up to 4500	.5-.75 in	Unequal 3	2 bottom	State tree
Mountain Hemlock	Less droopy	Over 4000	1-3 in	More equal 2	Top & btm	larger cone
Silver Fir <i>cones up</i>	Pale btm need	2000-5000	3.5-6 in	Sides & top	2 bottom	Silver bark
Grand Fir <i>grape fruit</i> "	2 rows of needles	2000-5000	2-4.5 in, grn-brn	Equal, side by side	2 bottom	needles not sharp
Noble Fir "	Blue green	3000-5000	4-7 in, bracts	4 sides, top groove	2 top	Rainier and south
Subalpine Fir "	Bottle brush	Over 4500	2.5-4 in	Equal	2 top, faint	Steeple
Ponderosa Pine	Distinctive	Up to 4500	3-6 in	3 5-10 in		East only
Lodgepole Pine			1-2 in	2 1-3 in		L = 2
Western White Pine		Up to 5000	6-11 in	5, splayed		W = 5
Whitebark Pine		5000+	2-3 in	5, stouter, bundled		W = 5
Sitka Spruce	Coastal most	Up to 2000	2.5-4 in	Prickly	2 top	
Engelmann Spruce	Mountains	3000-6000	1.5-2.5 in	4 sides, prickly, blue green	Top & bottom	Can roll needles, East most
Western Red Cedar	Reddish bark	Up to 4000	.5 in, rosebud	Smooth scales		West mostly
Alaska (Yellow) Cedar	Droopy branches	3000-6500	.5 in, roundish	Prickly scales		West only, krummholz
Alpine Larch	High elev	Over 5000	Bracts	Clusters	4-sided need	East only
Western Larch	Deciduous	3000-5000	Bracts	Clusters	3-sided need	East only
Pacific Yew <i>sharp</i>	Bush in shade	Up to 8000	Red berry	Like Grand	No stomata	West only