

Larix decidua

COMMON NAMES

European larch

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Gymnosperms

FLOWER COLOURS

No flowers

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rather open-branching deciduous tree to 43 m. **Needles** are grass-green, 4 cm long and are held in dense whorls of 40–65 on the side shoots of branchlets. **Male cones** are yellow, and drooping from the lower sides of branchlets. **Female cones** are crimson red, maturing to brown, elongated ovoid in shape, upright and 4 cm high. **Seed** with large asymmetric wing.

SIMILAR TAXA

Can be distinguished from *L. kaempferi* by the crimson-red juvenile female cones, and more dense and irregular needle clusters.

HABITAT

Terrestrial. A plant of montane and subalpine habitats and sites of low fertility (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). A plant of tussockland (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995).

GENUS

Larix

FAMILY

Pinaceae

AUTHORITY

Larix decidua Mill.

YEAR NATURALISED

1919

ORIGIN

Europe, W Asia

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental

TOLERANCES

The plant is intolerant to frost at time of spring flush), dense shade and poor drainage; tolerant of partial shade and slightly intolerant of drought (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). Physical damage to the plant results in regrowth if some green foliage remains (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). Fire can kill plants less than 2 m (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). Generally can grow in harsh conditions where no grazing, oversowing or topdressing has occurred (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995).



New season needles, Southland. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 19/09/2013, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Mature cones, Southland. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 19/09/2013, Licence: CC BY-NC.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Perennial. The life span of the plant is greater than 80 years (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995). 130,000-170,000 seeds per kg of cones (*ibid.*). Seed remains viable after 3–5 years of dry storage at 4°C (*ibid.*). Seed dispersed by wind (*ibid.*).

EXTRA INFORMATION

The National Wilding Conifer Control Programme team at Biosecurity New Zealand, a branch of Ministry for Primary Industries, has produced this wilding conifer [quick ID guide](#).

NVS CODE

LARDEC

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Timmins SM, Mackenzie IW. 1995. Weeds in New Zealand Protected Natural Areas database. *Department of Conservation Technical Series 8*. Department of Conservation, Wellington, NZ. 282 p.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/larix-decidua/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026