

Columnar Spruce

(Picea spp. — Colorado Blue, Norway, Serbian & Hybrid Columnar Forms)



Columnar spruces are narrow, upright evergreens prized for **year-round structure**, **dense foliage**, and **small footprint**, making them ideal for screening or tight urban spaces. In Colorado, they face the same pressures as their species counterparts: **mites**, **aphids**, **needle cast**, **canker**, and **environmental stress** from heat and drought.



Seasonal Pest & Disease Calendar

Icons: 🌸 Spring | ☀️ Summer | 🍂 Fall | ❄️ Winter

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Spruce spider mite	Mite	Spring & Fall	🌸🍂
Spruce aphid	Insect	Late Winter–Spring	❄️🌸
Needle cast (Rhizosphaera, Stigmina)	Fungus	Spring infection; symptoms Summer–Fall	🌸☀️🍂
Cytospora canker	Fungus	Year-round; visible Summer–Fall	☀️🍂
Spruce beetles (rare on ornamentals)	Insect/borer	Summer	☀️

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Environmental drought/heat stress	Abiotic	Summer–Fall	 

Pest & Disease Guide (Homeowner-Friendly)

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Common Symptoms</u>	<u>Treatment & Management</u>
Spruce Spider Mite (Common on Columnar Forms)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dull, dusty, stippled needles • Bronzing in patchy sections • Fine webbing on interior branches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform white paper “tap test” • Rinse foliage regularly • Miticide applications in spring/fall (pros)
Spruce Aphid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sticky needles • Sooty mold • Thinning on lower interior canopy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficial insects help naturally • Systemic insecticides when severe • Avoid high-nitrogen fertilization
Needle Cast (Rhizosphaera / Stigmina)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower branches thin first • Needles turn purple-brown • Black dots on needles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preventive fungicide in spring (pros) • Improve airflow—light thinning nearby plants • Avoid overhead irrigation
Cytospora Canker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White resin (“pitch”) on branches • Entire branches die from tip inward • Common on stressed spruces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prune out infected limbs back to collar • Sanitize tools • Improve watering; no chemical cure
Spruce Beetles (Low Risk in Urban Trees)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boring dust • Pitch tubes • Rapid decline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep tree well-watered • Avoid trunk injury • Pro preventive spray only if high regional pressure

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Common Symptoms</u>	<u>Treatment & Management</u>
Environmental Stress (Heat & Drought)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needle tip scorch • Lower branch dieback • Sparse growth on sunny west sides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep watering every 2–3 weeks in drought • Mulch (2–3") to moderate soil temps • Consider partial protection from intense afternoon sun

When to Worry vs. When It's Cosmetic

● When to Worry (action recommended)

- Widespread bronzing and needle loss (mite outbreak)
- Resin bleeding on multiple branches (canker)
- Entire lower limbs thinning quickly
- Purple-brown needles with black fruiting dots (needle cast)
- Rapid dieback during drought
- Big patches of off-color foliage under heat stress

Columnar forms have **less interior air flow**, making them more prone to **mites and needle cast** in Colorado.

● Mostly Cosmetic (monitor only)

- Natural shedding of older interior needles
- Slight tip burn during extreme heat
- Minor aphid activity with no dieback
- Light discoloration on shaded interior branches

- Small patches of needle cast in wet years

Columnar spruces remain healthy with **proper irrigation and proactive mite management**.