

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

Problem	Type	Active Season	Icons
Spruce spider mite	Mite	Spring & Fall	
Spruce aphid	Insect	Late Winter–Spring	
Needle cast (<i>Rhizosphaera, Stigmina</i>)	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

Problem

Common Symptoms

Treatment & Management

Environmental Stress (Heat & Drought)

- Needle tip scorch
- Lower branch dieback
- Sparse growth on sunny west sides

- 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.**