

TREES 'N' TRAITS: SPRUCE – “INNER STRENGTH”

Neil Baldwin

Trees are living organisms. They draw from their environment, they have life-nourishing fluids circulating within them, and they respire in a constant exchange with the world around them. You are a living organism too and, if you spend time in the company of trees, you have an unavoidable physiological connection with them. Is it much of a leap to allow that trees may affect you emotionally and spiritually, or to consider what extent your temperament might embody characteristics of certain species?

This final installment of Trees'n'Traits looks at Spruces, easily spotted by their conical Christmas Tree shape and by their short four-sided needles which can be rolled between the fingers unlike the flat needles of Balsam or Hemlock. Needles are arranged spirally on branches, often more dense on the top side. White Spruce is found all over Grey-Bruce. Black Spruce is more slender and mainly inhabits swampy areas. Norway Spruce, similar to White but with larger cones, has also become naturalized in Ontario.

Spruce provides food and shelter for many wildlife species. Squirrels fancy the seeds and often leave piles of stripped cones. Grouse and pheasants are often found nestled under lower branches especially in winter. Spruce wood is straight-grained, strong for its weight, and is used extensively for building lumber, furniture frames, crates and pallets. It also sees more graceful applications including sounding boards for pianos and violins.

If Maples are the showy extroverts of the forest (see October MOSAIC) then Spruces are the modest introverts. If you are a Spruce temperament, you may be one who quietly stands by ready to offer haven or sustenance whenever needed by others. Like Spruce's ability to shoulder heavy loads, you have more strength than others may presume because you tend not to groan or complain when life gets demanding. You just do what needs to be done.

In many ways, Spruce is an unremarkable-looking and pragmatic tree. Yet due to its functional shape and arrangement of

needles, Spruce retains a blanket of fresh snow on its boughs and brings to life a winter wonderland in a way in which none of the other trees do. If you are like a Spruce, you may sometimes see yourself as plain and practical; know that you also have the ability to bring intense beauty to the world in a way that is uniquely yours.

If you are a Spruce temperament needing to bolster inner resources, or if you wish to cultivate some Spruce characteristics, set intent to find presence among these trees. They tend not to occur in pure stands, instead being interspersed amongst other species, but they can also be found in plantations such as the one at the north end of Centre Road (Skinners Bluff) in the west field.

Hopefully these articles have brought you a little closer to the trees of Grey-Bruce. Perhaps you strongly identified with one of the species, or maybe you realized you are clearly a hybrid. Whichever the case, all our trees are extraordinary and worthy of respect, admiration and honour. **Ω**



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Spinzilla

Marion Gibson

Did you see us? Spinzilla is an international challenge to see who can spin the most yarn in a week. During the week of October 5 to 11 a total of 1,754 spinners, including 1,542 on 68 teams and 212 “rogues,” competed to help Spinzilla meet its ultimate goal of spinning enough yarn to wrap around the globe in five years (a total 35 days of spinning). The first two years of the challenge produced enough yarn to reach from New York City to Eureka, California. In 2015, we expected to get as far as Japan.

For the first time we had a team from Grey/Bruce, one of four teams in Canada. Twenty-five local spinners, hosted by Koigu Wool Designs near Dornoch, participated. We had a blast! To learn more about Spinzilla go to www.spinzilla.org.

Most of the spinners on Team Koigu are members of the Pottawatomi Spinners and Weavers Guild. Spinzilla gave us an opportunity to meet other local spinners and to promote our annual Show and Sale to be held on November 21 and 22 at the Owen Sound & North Grey Union Public Library.

In conjunction with the Library's Youth Services department, we are also offering a series of hands-on programs for children on Saturday November 21. There will be three workshops approximately one hour in length. For preschool to primary aged children, the steps to make fabric from sheep's wool will be presented using Leslie Helakoski's book *Woolbur*, and the children will have an opportunity to try each activity. There will also be a craft program introducing weaving and spinning skills for ages 5 and up, and a Learn to Knit program for ages 6 and up. The sessions have a limited number of spots. Preregister through the Library for these children's programs.

In addition to the exciting handspun and handwoven items available for sale there will once again be fibre-related vendors including Andre's Alpacas, Back to Basics Farm, Shar-Dean Farm and Woolies in the Country. As usual we will also have spinning and weaving demonstrations. Come and try it out! So how did we fare Spinzilla wise? To find out come to the Show and Sale. **Ω**