For the joy of gardening!
Estabrook's

BLACK SPRUCE CARE

LIGHT

Black spruce prefers a cool climate and good light. The golden and variegated selections in this group should be sheltered from scorching heat and drying exposure. Choose a location with reliable moisture and room for the cultivar's mature outline, away from hot pavement and heavily compacted ground.

WATER

Keep the root ball and surrounding soil consistently moist during establishment. Black spruce tolerates wetter ground than many ornamental spruces, but a new root ball still needs regular checking. Water at soil level and do not let a container dry severely. Match irrigation to actual soil moisture rather than a fixed schedule.

SOIL & PLANTING

Use moisture-retentive, preferably acidic soil. Black spruce tolerates wet sites, but avoid burying the root flare or graft. Mulch lightly around the roots without touching the trunk, and protect the root zone from digging or compaction. Do not assume wetter-site tolerance makes every nursery container suitable for permanent submersion.

FEEDING

Use a soil test to guide fertilizer and pH changes. Healthy spruces may need no routine feeding. If nutrients are needed, use a modest spring application of tree fertilizer at the label rate. Keep fertilizer off stems, avoid heavy nitrogen, and do not try to cure browning by feeding automatically.

SEASONAL CARE

Preserve the natural form and prune sparingly. Remove damaged or rubbing branches selectively; if light shaping is needed, shorten new growth to a live bud or side shoot. Do not cut back into bare old wood or top the tree. Maintain the intended leader and check support ties on trained weeping forms.

HELPFUL TIPS

Golden or variegated foliage may be an intended cultivar trait. Brown, brittle growth is different and should be checked for moisture stress, root trouble, or pests. This is Picea mariana, distinct from Black Hills spruce in the white spruce group. Cool roots and dependable moisture are central to successful care.