

Taiga Encyclopedia Article

Taiga

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Taiga

Taiga is a generic term for a type of conifer-dominated boreal forest found in northern environments. The word was first used to describe dense forests of spruce (especially *Picea abies*) in northern Russia. It has been extended to refer to boreal forests of similar structure in North America but dominated by other conifer **species** (especially *Picea mariana* and *Picea glauca*). Broad-leafed tree species are uncommon in taiga, although species of poplar (*Populus* spp.) and birch (*Betula* spp.) are present. Taiga environments are characterized by cool and short growing seasons. Plant roots can only exploit a superficial layer of seasonally thawed ground, the active layer, situated above permanently frozen substrate, or **permafrost**.



White spruce-willow taiga in Alaska.

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