

Taxaceae

A single genus of 10 species, only one species reaches NS. Ours is a dioecious shrub. Needles are yellowish green beneath, acute and evergreen, arranged in two rows along the twigs. Staminate flowers are globose, consisting of a few stamens, producing copious amounts of pollen. Mature seeds are green and are surrounded by a red fleshy outgrowth of the lower axis (aril). All parts of this plant should be considered dangerously toxic, although some animals graze it without ill effects.

Yews are commonly planted as ornamentals. If poisoning is a concern, staminate shrubs should be used. Effective anti-ovarian cancer alkaloids (taxol) were discovered in the Pacific yew. The Canada yew does not have the same efficacy.

***Taxus canadensis* Marsh.**

Canada Yew; if du Canada; gastug



Photo by Ross Hall

Evergreen, the decumbent stems rarely exceed a metre in height. The needles are spirally arranged in two ranks, giving the twigs a flat appearance. There is no aroma when crushed. Margins are involute. Unlike juniper, the needles are soft and not whitish.

Frequents cool, wet conifer woods, ravines and wooded swamps. Also typical where wet conditions prevail in the climax conifer forest.

Common where found, throughout the province.

NF to MB, south to TN and NC.



Photo by Gerry Lund