



Richmond Centre for Disability

Duke of Edinburgh Challenge Expedition Information

Trees of Vancouver and the Pacific Northwest

Vancouver and the west coast of Canada are famous for having the largest temperate rainforest in the world. The lush green trees that make up these forests are a result of the moist climate caused by rainfall from the clouds as they move upwards over the coastal mountain range. With mild winters and little snowfall at lower elevations during the winter, rain can fall year-round with some areas accumulating over 3000mm of precipitation a year.

The result of all this moisture is dense, healthy rainforests comprised of groves of Western Red Cedar, Western Hemlock, and Douglas Fir trees. As you hike the trails around Vancouver, you will pass hundreds of these trees, some of which maybe hundred's of years old.

Western Red Cedar

Red Cedar trees are very common in the parks and mountains surrounding Vancouver. The bark of the tree is typically a grey colour and red cedar trees can grow over 60 meters tall.

Western Red Cedar trees prefer to grow in areas of lots of moisture such as the coastal areas of British Columbia. They are commonly found in valleys and mid-elevations where the temperature is cool.

Traditionally, the First Nations people used the wood from these trees to build totem poles, canoes, and longhouses. The forest industry continues to log Cedar trees as they are commonly used today for building houses and furniture.

Western Hemlock

With a distinctively narrow and drooping crown, Western Hemlock trees are common along the coastal areas of British Columbia. They have reddish, brown bark and their roots are not buried deep which can cause them to be uprooted and fallen during wind storms.

One of the unique abilities of Western Hemlock is it can grow out of old stumps and decaying wood. The trees can reach a height of between 30 to 50 meters.

Today, Western Hemlock is used to make doors and windows. Traditionally it was used for carvings while the needles would be used in herbal teas.

Douglas Fir

With the ability to reach 85 meters in height or more, Douglas Fir trees can look spectacular. The needles are flat and pointy and are a bright green colour. The tree bark is generally grey or brown, however with age becomes more reddish brown.

The Douglas Fir tree is found throughout the southern half of British Columbia and is an important tree for wildlife. Animals, such as bears, mice, and squirrels, eat the seeds from the tree and the sticky sap beneath the layer of bark.

Douglas Fir is a very dense wood and therefore is popular in the construction of heavy infrastructure such as docks, bridges, or large commercial buildings. The First Nations used the wood for cooking and smoking pits as well as for flooring in longhouses.