

Hemlocks, ranking fifth in volume of standing timber, have considerable commercial importance. Western hemlock grows plentifully along the Pacific Coast and west of the Rockies in the interior wet belt of British Columbia. It is one of the principal timber-producing species in western Canada and is also an important source of pulpwood. Eastern hemlock is found from the Atlantic to western Ontario, although not in a wide or continuous pattern. It is used to produce a number of products including pulpwood, plywood and lumber. Mountain hemlock is found in British Columbia in parts of the coastal forest and in the heavier rainfall areas of the interior.

Of the six native birches, only two are of commercial importance – yellow birch and white birch. Most abundant is white birch which grows over a vast part of Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific and extends up to the northern tree limit. One variety, western paper birch, reaches heights of 100 feet and diameters of three feet or more. Yellow birch is a valuable hardwood species used extensively for flooring, veneer and plywood. Its range extends from the Atlantic to Lake Superior.

The native trees commonly known as 'cedars' include the arbor-vitae (eastern white cedar and western red cedar), yellow cypress (yellow cedar) and a juniper (eastern red cedar). Together they make up an important group of commercial species. Eastern white cedar is found from Nova Scotia to Manitoba and as far north as James Bay in Quebec and Ontario. Its wood, which is light and resistant to decay, is used for posts, poles, boats and other purposes where timber is exposed to situations favourable to decay. Western red cedar is of major importance in British Columbia where it ranges from the Pacific Coast to the Rocky Mountains. It is used for lumber, exterior siding, shingles, poles and posts, doors, window sashes and other purposes where resistance to decay is required. Yellow cypress – commonly called yellow cedar or Alaska cedar – is found mainly in the Pacific Coast region where it grows down to sea level in the more northerly sections. As it extends farther south, it seeks higher elevations. Its wood, like that of the other cedars, is valued in situations where resistance to decay is needed.

There are ten native species of maple, six of which are of commercial value. Only two species are known as hard maples, producing wood that is both hard and strong – sugar maple and the closely related black maple. Sugar maple ranges from the Atlantic to Lake Superior, while black maple is found mainly in southern Ontario. Hard maple constitutes one of the most valuable commercial hardwoods in Canada. It is used for furniture, flooring, veneer, quality plywood, turnery and other specialized purposes where strength and hardness are needed. Sugar maple and, to a lesser degree, black maple are tapped for the maple sugar industry. Bigleaf maple is found on the lower Pacific Coast mainland and on Vancouver Island. The wood is only moderately hard and lacks strength but, owing to the limited local supply of hardwoods, this tree is of some importance for furniture and other specialized uses in the immediate area. Red maple and silver maple are eastern species. Red maple ranges from Newfoundland to western Ontario, while silver maple is concentrated mainly in southern Ontario and southwestern Quebec. Their wood is weaker and softer than that of the hard maples and these trees are not important timber producers. The Manitoba maple, ranging from Ontario across the southern parts of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and southeastern Alberta, produces a soft, moderately light wood that is low in strength. It is better known as a shelterbelt tree.

There are three species of larch in Canada. Two of them – eastern larch, better known as tamarack, and western larch – have commercial value. Tamarack is widely distributed from Newfoundland to the British Columbia - Yukon border and reaches far into the Northwest Territories. The wood is used for poles, posts, piling, boxes, crates and pulp. Western larch, found mainly in southeastern British Columbia, is one of the important timber-producing trees of western Canada. The wood, being hard and strong, is used mainly in construction but is also made into flooring, interior and exterior furnishings, and pulp.

Other trees of less commercial significance include oak, ash, beech, elm and basswood. Valuable as the wood of these species may be, it is usually obtainable in limited quantities only. However, the species may have considerable local importance and they also contribute greatly to the forest landscape.

Canada's better known species are the commercially exploited trees, but in the forest all species have a role to play in maintaining the ecological balance, controlling water run-off and preventing soil erosion, and also in providing a habitat for native fauna and recreational facilities for all who wish to enjoy them.