



# ask

Celebrating 21 Years!

the landscape professional

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

## Welcome to my weekly series!

Email or mail your questions to: [info@sprigsandtwigs.net](mailto:info@sprigsandtwigs.net) or Linda Lillie, Sprigs & Twigs Inc, PO Box 245, Gales Ferry, CT 06335



Thank you Readers for Voting Sprigs & Twigs Best Landscape Company Two Years in a Row & Best Tree Service!

**Question this Week:** I have this unusual tree growing in my neighborhood, what is wrong with it? ...Lori

### Linda's Answer:

That is an awesome picture of a very unusual botanical occurrence. Your picture shows a dwarf Alberta spruce (*Picea glauca* var. *albertiana* 'Conica') that has "reverted". The dwarf Alberta spruce, the dwarf version of a regular white spruce that can grow over 100ft tall, is actually an accident of nature. One of the first reports of a dwarf Alberta spruce was back in 1904, when staff members of Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum discovered it in Alberta, Canada. Their studies revealed that it was a naturally occurring genetic mutant of the white spruce. Many years ago, a genetic "mistake" created the original dwarf Alberta spruce and a recent genetic "mistake" has un-dwarfed it, which is what you see in the picture above. Although it is very unusual to see a dwarf Alberta spruce that has reverted, if you happen to have one, the fast growing reversion needs to be pruned off to keep the tree dwarfed.



Dwarf Alberta spruce are commonly used in landscape plantings, especially on both sides of a front door, but you need to be cautious. "Dwarf" does not mean "small", it means "slow-growing". They can grow to 12 feet tall and easily overtake a planting space over time unless you have allowed for the tree's eventual size. Thank you for a great question and picture!

Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 21 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects..

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