

Larch - *larix decidua*



The best time to spot the Larch is in the spring when most of the canopy trees are still bare and the fresh green leaves of the Larch stand out clearly.

As might be expected, much of the Larch is to be found in Stevens Larch (below left 2/4/12) but there are also individual trees dotted throughout the wood and a large group to the west of Middle Gorse (below right 1/4/12). There was a sizeable plantation of Larches between East and Middle Gorse but these were felled in 2009 in order to let more light into the area in hope of encouraging the Gorse to return. This has proved very effective as the distant view of the Middle Gorse Larches shows (bottom right 5/4/12).



The Larch is one of four species of conifer in Selsdon Wood (the others being Norway Spruce and Scots and Corsican Pine). It is the only deciduous conifer, losing its needle-like leaves each autumn and producing new ones in spring. The needles are long and slender and grouped in bundles.



The trunk is straight and tapering with flaky, grey bark that is deeply ridged. There are few branches within reach.



The cones are quite distinctive and unlike those of the Spruce or Pine. They also seem less attractive to squirrels as few gnawed cones can be found. The cone-bearing twigs remain on the bare trees throughout the winter, which make the Larch easy to spot even when it is not in leaf.



Take a spring walk around the Gorses area and through Steven's Larch.
Spot the Larches with their tall straight trunks and look for cones around the base of the trees.
Can you find any that have been nibbled by squirrels?

