

# Package ‘varSelRF’

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**Title** Variable selection using random forests

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**Depends** R (>= 2.0.0), randomForest

**Suggests** snow, Rmpi

**Description** Variable selection from random forests using both backwards variable elimination (for the selection of small sets of non-redundant variables) and selection based on the importance spectrum (somewhat similar to scree plots; for the selection of large, potentially highly-correlated variables). Main applications in high-dimensional data (e.g., microarray data, and other genomics and proteomics applications). You can use rpvm instead of Rmpi if you want but I've only tested with Rmpi.

**LazyLoad** Yes

**License** GPL (>= 2)

**URL** <http://ligarto.org/rdiaz/Software/Software.html>,

**http** [//ligarto.org/rdiaz/Papers/rfVS/randomForestVarSel.html](http://ligarto.org/rdiaz/Papers/rfVS/randomForestVarSel.html)

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basicClusterInit    *Initialize a cluster of workstations*

---

## Description

Use Snow to initialize a cluster of workstations, with either MPI or PVM as the type of cluster, setup the random number generator, and load randomForest library in all the nodes.

## Usage

```
basicClusterInit(clusterNumberNodes = 1, nameCluster = "TheCluster",
                 typeCluster = "MPI")
```

## Arguments

`clusterNumberNodes`    The number of nodes in the cluster. If you only have 1 CPU you can pass a 1 here.

`nameCluster`    The name you want to give to the newly created cluster.

`typeCluster`    Either "MPI" or "PVM".

## Details

This function is a wrapper to [makeCluster](#) with a little bit of additional code (load randomForest and varSelRF in all the nodes and initialize the random number generator). It can be used to initialize a cluster of workstations. It will be called by several other functions in the package if you ask that computations be done using a cluster and you do not specify a cluster name. In this case, a "dummy" cluster of only one node will be created.

For this function to run you **MUST** have installed the following R packages: snow, Rmpi or rpvm, and rsprng. You might also need to start your cluster environment (e.g., "lambboot whatever.the.name.of.your.def.file" from a shell).

## Value

This function is used to create a cluster. An object with name "nameCluster" with a reference to the cluster will be created. See [makeCluster](#) for details.

**Note**

It is a lot better if you specify all arguments: if you really have a network of workstations you can use, you will need to specify the number of nodes and the correct type of cluster (MPI or PVM). If you don't have a network of workstations then nothing is gained (and a little bit lost) from asking the functions in this package to use the cluster, and you should specify "usingCluster = FALSE".

I have only tested the workings of this and similar functions, and the workings of the package, extensively with MPI, not PVM, though I'd expect things to work equally well with both PVM and MPI.

Instead of using the rsrpng library, you could use the rlecuyer package. Changing the code should be straightforward (see `clusterSetupRNG`).

**Author(s)**

Ramon Diaz-Uriarte (rdiaz02@gmail.com)

**References**

<http://ligarto.org/rdiaz/Papers/rfVS/randomForestVarSel.html>

**See Also**

`makeCluster`, `randomVarImpsRF`, `\code{randomVarImpsRF}`

**Examples**

```
## Create a simple cluster with only one slave node. Will work even
## in 1 CPU cases if you have the required packages.
## Not run:
basicClusterInit(clusterNumberNodes = 1,
                  nameCluster = "TheCluster",
                  typeCluster = "MPI")
## End(Not run)
```

---

plot.varSelRF

*Plot a varSelRF object*

---

**Description**

Plots a varSelRF object, showing the initial variable importances, and the change in OOB error with the number of variables.

**Usage**

```
## S3 method for class 'varSelRF':
plot(x, nvar = NULL, which = c(1, 2), ...)
```

**Arguments**

<code>x</code>	The varSelRF object.
<code>nvar</code>	The number of variables for which the initial variable importances should be shown. By default, only the 30 with the largest importance are shown.
<code>which</code>	which plots should be drawn, either 1 (for the initial variable importance plot), 2 (for the change in OOB error with the number of variables) or <code>c(1, 2)</code> for drawing both plots
<code>...</code>	Not used.

**Value**

This function is only used for its side effect of producing plots.

**Warning**

The OOB Error rate is biased down (and can be severely biased down) because we do (potentially many) rounds of reducing the set of predictor variables until we minimize this OOB error rate.

**Author(s)**

Ramon Diaz-Uriarte (rdiaz02@gmail.com)

**References**

Diaz-Uriarte, R. and Alvarez de Andres, S. (2005) Variable selection from random forests: application to gene expression data. Tech. report. <http://ligarto.org/rdiaz/Papers/rfVS/randomForestVarSel.html>

**See Also**

[varSelRF](#), [randomForest](#), [importance](#)

**Examples**

```
x <- matrix(rnorm(25 * 30), ncol = 30)
x[1:10, 1:2] <- x[1:10, 1:2] + 2
cl <- factor(c(rep("A", 10), rep("B", 15)))

rf.vs1 <- varSelRF(x, cl, ntree = 200, ntreeIterat = 100,
                  vars.drop.frac = 0.2)

rf.vs1
plot(rf.vs1)
```

---

plot.varSelRFBoot *plot a varSelRFBoot object*

---

### Description

Plots of out-of-bag predictions and OOB error vs. number of variables.

### Usage

```
## S3 method for class 'varSelRFBoot':
plot(x, oobProb = TRUE,
      oobProbBoxPlot = FALSE,
      ErrorNum = TRUE,
      subject.names = NULL,
      class.to.plot = NULL, ...)
```

### Arguments

x	An object of class varSelRFBoot, such as returned by function <a href="#">varSelRFBoot</a> .
oobProb	If TRUE plot (average) out-of-bag predictions. See <a href="#">prob.predictions</a> in <a href="#">varSelRFBoot</a> for more details about the out-of-bag predictions.
oobProbBoxPlot	If TRUE plot a box-plot of out-of-bag predictions.
ErrorNum	If TRUE plot OOB error (as returned by random forest) vs. the number of variables.
subject.names	If not NULL, a vector, of the same length as the number of cases (samples or subjects) with IDs for the cases/samples/subjects, that will be shown to the left of the average out-of-bag prediction.
class.to.plot	If not NULL, an integer or a vector of integers. These integers are those class levels for which out-of-bag predictions plots will be returned.
...	Not used.

### Value

This function is only used for its side effects of producing plots.

### Warning

The OOB Error rate is biased down (and can be severely biased down) because we do (potentially many) rounds of reducing the set of predictor variables until we minimize this OOB error rate. Note, however, that this is NOT the error rate reported as the estimate of the error rate for the procedure (for which we use the .632+ bootstrap rule).

**Note**

When plotting the out-of-bag predictions, we show one plot for each class. This is an overkill for two-class problems, but not necessarily for problems with more than two classes. Use `class.to.plot` to plot only those classes that interest you.

**Author(s)**

Ramon Diaz-Uriarte (rdiaz02@gmail.com)

**References**

Breiman, L. (2001) Random forests. *Machine Learning*, **45**, 5–32.

Diaz-Uriarte, R. and Alvarez de Andres, S. (2005) Variable selection from random forests: application to gene expression data. Tech. report. <http://ligarto.org/rdiaz/Papers/rfVS/randomForestVarSel.html>

Efron, B. & Tibshirani, R. J. (1997) Improvements on cross-validation: the .632+ bootstrap method. *J. American Statistical Association*, **92**, 548–560.

**See Also**

[randomForest](#), [varSelRF](#), [summary.varSelRFBoot](#), [varSelRFBoot](#)

**Examples**

```
## Not run:
## This is a small example, but can take some time.

x <- matrix(rnorm(25 * 30), ncol = 30)
x[1:10, 1:2] <- x[1:10, 1:2] + 2
cl <- factor(c(rep("A", 10), rep("B", 15)))

rf.vsl <- varSelRF(x, cl, ntree = 200, ntreeIterat = 100,
                 vars.drop.frac = 0.2)
rf.vsb <- varSelRFBoot(x, cl,
                     bootnumber = 10,
                     usingCluster = FALSE,
                     srf = rf.vsl)

rf.vsb
summary(rf.vsb)
plot(rf.vsb)
## End(Not run)
```

---

randomVarImpsRF      *Variable importances from random forest on permuted class labels*

---

### Description

Return variable importances from random forests fitted to data sets like the original except class labels have been randomly permuted.

### Usage

```
randomVarImpsRF(xdata, Class, forest, numrandom = 100,
                whichImp = "impsUnscaled", usingCluster = TRUE,
                TheCluster = NULL, ...)
```

### Arguments

xdata	A data frame or matrix, with subjects/cases in rows and variables in columns. NAs not allowed.
Class	The dependent variable; must be a factor.
forest	A previously fitted random forest (see <a href="#">randomForest</a> ).
numrandom	The number of random permutations of the class labels.
whichImp	A vector of one or more of <code>impsUnscaled</code> , <code>impsScaled</code> , <code>impsGini</code> , that correspond, respectively, to the (unscaled) mean decrease in accuracy, the scaled mean decrease in accuracy, and the Gini index. See below and <a href="#">randomForest</a> , <a href="#">importance</a> and the references for further explanations of the measures of variable importance.
usingCluster	If TRUE use a cluster to parallelize the calculations.
TheCluster	The name of the cluster, if one is used.
...	Not used.

### Details

The measure of variable importance most often used is based on the decrease of classification accuracy when values of a variable in a node of a tree are permuted randomly (see references); we use the unscaled version —see our paper and supplementary material. Note that, by default, [importance](#) returns the scaled version.

### Value

An object of class `randomVarImpsRF`, which is a list with one to three named components. The name of each component corresponds to the types of variable importance measures selected (i.e., `impsUnscaled`, `impsScaled`, `impsGini`).

Each component is a matrix, of dimensions number of variables by `numrandom`; each element  $(i, j)$  of this matrix is the variable importance for variable  $i$  and random permutation  $j$ .

**Author(s)**

Ramon Diaz-Uriarte (rdiaz02@gmail.com)

**References**

Breiman, L. (2001) Random forests. *Machine Learning*, **45**, 5–32.

Diaz-Uriarte, R. and Alvarez de Andres, S. (2005) Variable selection from random forests: application to gene expression data. Tech. report. <http://ligarto.org/rdiaz/Papers/rfVS/randomForestVarSel.html>

Svetnik, V., Liaw, A. , Tong, C & Wang, T. (2004) Application of Breiman's random forest to modeling structure-activity relationships of pharmaceutical molecules. Pp. 334-343 in *F. Roli, J. Kittler, and T. Windeatt* (eds.). *Multiple Classifier Systems, Fifth International Workshop, MCS 2004*, Proceedings, 9-11 June 2004, Cagliari, Italy. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol. 3077. Berlin: Springer.

**See Also**

[randomForest](#), [varSelRF](#), [varSelRFBoot](#), [varSelImpSpecRF](#), [randomVarImpsRFplot](#)

**Examples**

```
x <- matrix(rnorm(45 * 30), ncol = 30)
x[1:20, 1:2] <- x[1:20, 1:2] + 2
cl <- factor(c(rep("A", 20), rep("B", 25)))

rf <- randomForest(x, cl, ntree = 200, importance = TRUE)
rf.rvi <- randomVarImpsRF(x, cl,
                          rf,
                          numrandom = 20,
                          usingCluster = FALSE)

randomVarImpsRFplot(rf.rvi, rf)
```

---

randomVarImpsRFplot

*Plot random random variable importances*

---

**Description**

Plot variable importances from random permutations of class labels and the variable importances from the original data set.

**Usage**

```
randomVarImpsRFplot(randomImportances, forest,
                    whichImp = "impsUnscaled", nvars = NULL,
                    show.var.names = FALSE, vars.highlight = NULL,
                    main = NULL, screeRandom = TRUE,
                    lwdBlack = 1.5,
                    lwdRed = 2,
                    lwdLightblue = 1,
                    cexPoint = 1,
                    overlayTrue = FALSE,
                    xlab = NULL,
                    ylab = NULL, ...)
```

**Arguments**

randomImportances	A list with a structure such as the object return by <a href="#">randomVarImpsRF</a>
forest	A random forest fitted to the original data. This forest must have been fitted with <code>importances = TRUE</code> .
whichImp	The importance measure to use. One (only one) of <code>impsUnscaled</code> , <code>impsScaled</code> , <code>impsGini</code> , that correspond, respectively, to the (unscaled) mean decrease in accuracy, the scaled mean decrease in accuracy, and the Gini index. See below and <a href="#">randomForest</a> , <code>importance</code> and the references for further explanations of the measures of variable importance.
nvars	If <code>NULL</code> will show the plot for the complete range of variables. If an integer, will plot only the most important <code>nvars</code> .
show.var.names	If <code>TRUE</code> , show the variable names in the plot. Unless you are plotting few variables, it probably won't be of any use.
vars.highlight	A vector indicating the variables to highlight in the plot with a vertical blue segment. You need to pass here a vector of variable names, not variable positions.
main	The title for the plot.
screeRandom	If <code>TRUE</code> , order all the variable importances (i.e., those from both the original and the permuted class labels data sets) from largest to smallest before plotting. The plot will thus resemble a usual "scree plot".
lwdBlack	The width of the line to use for the importances from the original data set.
lwdRed	The width of the line to use for the average of the importances for the permuted data sets.
lwdLightblue	The width of the line for the importances for the individual permuted data sets.
cexPoint	<code>cex</code> argument for the points for the importances from the original data set.
overlayTrue	If <code>TRUE</code> , the variable importance from the original data set will be plotted last, so you can see it even if buried in the middle of many green lines; can be of help when the plot does not allow you to see the black line.
xlab	The title for the x-axis (see <code>xlab</code> ).

ylab            The title for the y-axis (see ylab).  
 ...            Additional arguments to plot.

### Value

Only used for its side effects of producing plots. In particular, you will see lines of three colors:

black           Connects the variable importances from the original simulated data.  
 green           Connect the variable importances from the data sets with permuted class labels; there will be as many lines as numrandom where used when `randomVarImpsRF` was called to obtain the random importances.  
 red             Connects the average of the importances from the permuted data sets.

Additionally, if you used a valid set of values for `vars.highlight`, these will be shown with a vertical blue segment.

### Note

These plots resemble the scree plots commonly used with principal component analysis, and the actual choice of colors was taken from the importance spectrum plots of *Friedman & Meulman*.

### Author(s)

Ramon Diaz-Uriarte (rdiaz02@gmail.com)

### References

- Breiman, L. (2001) Random forests. *Machine Learning*, **45**, 5–32.
- Diaz-Uriarte, R. , Alvarez de Andres, S. (2005) Variable selection from random forests: application to gene expression data. Tech. report. <http://ligarto.org/rdiaz/Papers/rfVS/randomForestVarSel.html>
- Friedman, J., Meulman, J. (2005) Clustering objects on subsets of attributes (with discussion). *J. Royal Statistical Society, Series B*, **66**, 815–850.

### See Also

`randomForest`, `varSelRF`, `varSelRFBoot`, `varSelImpSpecRF`, `randomVarImpsRF`

### Examples

```
x <- matrix(rnorm(45 * 30), ncol = 30)
x[1:20, 1:2] <- x[1:20, 1:2] + 2
cl <- factor(c(rep("A", 20), rep("B", 25)))

rf <- randomForest(x, cl, ntree = 200, importance = TRUE)
rf.rvi <- randomVarImpsRF(x, cl,
                          rf,
                          numrandom = 20,
                          usingCluster = FALSE)
```

```
randomVarImpsRFplot(rf.rvi, rf)
```

---

```
selProbPlot           Selection probability plot for variable importance from random forests
```

---

### Description

Plot, for the top ranked  $k$  variables from the original sample, the probability that each of these variables is included among the top ranked  $k$  genes from the bootstrap samples.

### Usage

```
selProbPlot(object, k = c(20, 100),
             color = TRUE,
             legend = FALSE,
             xlegend = 68,
             ylegend = 0.93,
             cexlegend = 1.4,
             main = NULL,
             xlab = "Rank of gene",
             ylab = "Selection probability",
             pch = 19, ...)
```

### Arguments

object	An object of class <code>varSelRFBoot</code> such as returned by the <code>varSelRFBoot</code> function.
k	A two-component vector with the $k$ -th upper variables for which you want the plots.
color	If TRUE a color plot; if FALSE, black and white.
legend	If TRUE, show a legend.
xlegend	The x-coordinate for the legend.
ylegend	The y-coordinate for the legend.
cexlegend	The <code>cex</code> argument for the legend.
main	main for the plot.
xlab	xlab for the plot.
ylab	ylab for the plot.
pch	pch for the plot.
...	Additional arguments to plot.

### Details

*Pepe et al., 2003* suggested the use of selection probability plots to evaluate the stability and confidence on our selection of "relevant genes." This paper also presents several more sophisticated ideas not implemented here.

**Value**

Used for its side effects of producing a plot. In a single plot show the "selection probability plot" for the upper (largest variable importance) `k`th variables. By default, show the upper 20 and the upper 100 colored blue and red respectively.

**Note**

This function is in very rudimentary shape and could be used for more general types of data. I wrote specifically to produce Fig. 4 of the paper.

**Author(s)**

Ramon Diaz-Uriarte (rdiaz02@gmail.com)

**References**

- Breiman, L. (2001) Random forests. *Machine Learning*, **45**, 5–32.
- Diaz-Uriarte, R. , Alvarez de Andres, S. (2005) Variable selection from random forests: application to gene expression data. Tech. report. <http://ligarto.org/rdiaz/Papers/rfVS/randomForestVarSel.html>
- Pepe, M. S., Longton, G., Anderson, G. L. & Schummer, M. (2003) Selecting differentially expressed genes from microarray experiments. *Biometrics*, **59**, 133–142.
- Svetnik, V., Liaw, A. , Tong, C & Wang, T. (2004) Application of Breiman's random forest to modeling structure-activity relationships of pharmaceutical molecules. Pp. 334-343 in *F. Roli, J. Kittler, and T. Windeatt* (eds.). *Multiple Classifier Systems, Fifth International Workshop, MCS 2004*, Proceedings, 9-11 June 2004, Cagliari, Italy. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol. 3077. Berlin: Springer.

**See Also**

[randomForest](#), [varSelRF](#), [varSelRFBoot](#), [randomVarImpsRFplot](#), [randomVarImpsRF](#)

**Examples**

```
## This is a small example, but can take some time.

x <- matrix(rnorm(25 * 30), ncol = 30)
x[1:10, 1:2] <- x[1:10, 1:2] + 2
cl <- factor(c(rep("A", 10), rep("B", 15)))

rf.vsl <- varSelRF(x, cl, ntree = 200, ntreeIterat = 100,
                 vars.drop.frac = 0.2)
rf.vsb <- varSelRFBoot(x, cl,
                      bootnumber = 10,
                      usingCluster = FALSE,
                      srf = rf.vsl)
selProbPlot(rf.vsb, k = c(5, 10), legend = TRUE,
            xlegend = 8, ylegend = 0.8)
```

---

```
summary.varSelRFBoot
```

*Summary of a varSelRFBoot object*

---

## Description

Returns error rate and stability measures of a varSelRFBoot object.

## Usage

```
## S3 method for class 'varSelRFBoot':
summary(object, return.model.freqs = FALSE,
        return.class.probs = TRUE,
        return.var.freqs.b.models = TRUE, ...)
```

## Arguments

object	An object of class varSelRFBoot, as returned from <a href="#">varSelRFBoot</a> .
return.model.freqs	If TRUE return a table with the frequencies of the final "models" (sets of selected variables) over all bootstrap replications.
return.class.probs	If TRUE return average class probabilities for each sample based on the out-of-bag probabilities (see <a href="#">varSelRFBoot</a> , the <code>prob.predictions</code> component).
return.var.freqs.b.models	If TRUE return the frequencies of all variables selected from the bootstrap replicates.
...	Not used.

## Value

If `return.class.probs = TRUE` a matrix with the average class probabilities for each sample based on the out-of-bag probabilities.

Regardless of that setting, print out several summaries:

Summaries related to the "simplified" random forest on the original data

Such as the number and identity of the variables selected.

Summaries related to the error rate estimate

Such as the .632+ estimate, and some of its components

Summaries related to the stability (uniqueness) of the results obtained

Such as the frequency of the selected variables in the bootstrap runs, the frequency of the selected variables in the bootstrap runs that are also among the variables selected from the complete run, the overlap of the bootstrap forests with the forest from the original data set (see [varSelRF](#) for the definition of overlap), and (optionally) the frequency of the "models", where a model is the set of variables selected in any particular run.

**Author(s)**

Ramon Diaz-Uriarte (rdiaz02@gmail.com)

**References**

Breiman, L. (2001) Random forests. *Machine Learning*, **45**, 5–32.

Diaz-Uriarte, R. and Alvarez de Andres, S. (2005) Variable selection from random forests: application to gene expression data. Tech. report. <http://ligarto.org/rdiaz/Papers/rfVS/randomForestVarSel.html>

Efron, B. & Tibshirani, R. J. (1997) Improvements on cross-validation: the .632+ bootstrap method. *J. American Statistical Association*, **92**, 548–560.

**See Also**

[randomForest](#), [varSelRF](#), [varSelRFBoot](#), [plot.varSelRFBoot](#),

**Examples**

```
## Not run:
## This is a small example, but can take some time.

x <- matrix(rnorm(25 * 30), ncol = 30)
x[1:10, 1:2] <- x[1:10, 1:2] + 2
cl <- factor(c(rep("A", 10), rep("B", 15)))

rf.vsl <- varSelRF(x, cl, ntree = 200, ntreeIterat = 100,
                 vars.drop.frac = 0.2)
rf.vsb <- varSelRFBoot(x, cl,
                    bootnumber = 10,
                    usingCluster = FALSE,
                    srf = rf.vsl)

rf.vsb
summary(rf.vsb)
plot(rf.vsb)
## End(Not run)
```

---

varSelImpSpecRF

*Variable selection using the "importance spectrum"*

---

**Description**

Perform variable selection based on a simple heuristic using the importance spectrum of the original data compared to the importance spectra from the same data with the class labels randomly permuted.

**Usage**

```
varSelImpSpecRF(forest, xdata = NULL, Class = NULL,
               randomImps = NULL,
               threshold = 0.1,
               numrandom = 20,
               whichImp = "impsUnscaled",
               usingCluster = TRUE,
               TheCluster = NULL, ...)
```

**Arguments**

forest	A previously fitted random forest (see <a href="#">randomForest</a> ).
xdata	A data frame or matrix, with subjects/cases in rows and variables in columns. NAs not allowed.
Class	The dependent variable; must be a factor.
randomImps	A list with a structure such as the object return by <a href="#">randomVarImpsRF</a>
threshold	The threshold for the selection of variables. See details.
numrandom	The number of random permutations of the class labels.
whichImp	One of <code>impsUnscaled</code> , <code>impsScaled</code> , <code>impsGini</code> , that correspond, respectively, to the (unscaled) mean decrease in accuracy, the scaled mean decrease in accuracy, and the Gini index. See below and <a href="#">randomForest</a> , <a href="#">importance</a> and the references for further explanations of the measures of variable importance.
usingCluster	If TRUE use a cluster to parallelize the calculations.
TheCluster	The name of the cluster, if one is used.
...	Not used.

**Details**

You can either pass as arguments a valid object for `randomImps`, obtained from a previous call to [randomVarImpsRF](#) OR you can pass a covariate data frame and a dependent variable, and these will be used to obtain the random importances. The former is preferred for normal use, because this function will not returned the computed random variable importances, and this computation can be lengthy. If you pass both `randomImps`, `xdata`, and `Class`, `randomImps` will be used.

To select variables, start by ordering from largest ( $i = 1$ ) to smallest ( $i = p$ , where  $p$  is the number of variables), the variable importances from the original data and from each of the data sets with permuted class labels. (So the ordering is done in each data set independently). Compute  $q_i$ , the  $1 - \text{threshold}$  quantile of the ordered variable importances from the permuted data at ordered position  $i$ . Then, starting from  $i = 1$ , let  $i_a$  be the first  $i$  for which the variable importance from the original data is smaller than  $q_i$ . Select all variables from  $i = 1$  to  $i = i_a - 1$ .

**Value**

A vector with the names of the selected variables, ordered by decreasing importance.

**Note**

The name of this function is related to the idea of "importance spectrum plot", which is the term that *Friedman & Meulman, 2005* use in their paper.

**Author(s)**

Ramon Diaz-Uriarte (rdiaz02@gmail.com)

**References**

Breiman, L. (2001) Random forests. *Machine Learning*, **45**, 5–32.

Diaz-Uriarte, R. , Alvarez de Andres, S. (2005) Variable selection from random forests: application to gene expression data. Tech. report. <http://ligarto.org/rdiaz/Papers/rfVS/randomForestVarSel.html>

Friedman, J., Meulman, J. (2005) Clustering objects on subsets of attributes (with discussion). *J. Royal Statistical Society, Series B*, **66**, 815–850.

**See Also**

[randomForest](#), [varSelRF](#), [varSelRFBoot](#), [randomVarImpsRFplot](#), [randomVarImpsRF](#)

**Examples**

```
x <- matrix(rnorm(45 * 30), ncol = 30)
x[1:20, 1:2] <- x[1:20, 1:2] + 2
cl <- factor(c(rep("A", 20), rep("B", 25)))

rf <- randomForest(x, cl, ntree = 200, importance = TRUE)
rf.rvi <- randomVarImpsRF(x, cl,
                          rf,
                          numrandom = 20,
                          usingCluster = FALSE)
varSelImpSpecRF(rf, randomImps = rf.rvi)
```

---

varSelRF

---

*Variable selection from random forests using OOB error*


---

**Description**

Using the OOB error as minimization criterion, carry out variable elimination from random forest, by successively eliminating the least important variables (with importance as returned from random forest).

**Usage**

```
varSelRF(xdata, Class, c.sd = 1, mtryFactor = 1, ntree = 5000,
         ntreeIterat = 2000, vars.drop.num = NULL, vars.drop.frac = 0.2,
         whole.range = TRUE, recompute.var.imp = FALSE, verbose = FALSE,
         returnFirstForest = TRUE, fitted.rf = NULL)
```

**Arguments**

<code>xdata</code>	A data frame or matrix, with subjects/cases in rows and variables in columns. NAs not allowed.
<code>Class</code>	The dependent variable; must be a factor.
<code>c.sd</code>	The factor that multiplies the sd. to decide on stopping the iterations or choosing the final solution. See reference for details.
<code>mtryFactor</code>	The multiplication factor of $\sqrt{\text{number.of.variables}}$ for the number of variables to use for the <code>ntry</code> argument of <code>randomForest</code> .
<code>ntree</code>	The number of trees to use for the first forest; same as <code>ntree</code> for <code>randomForest</code> .
<code>ntreeIterat</code>	The number of trees to use ( <code>ntree</code> of <code>randomForest</code> ) for all additional forests.
<code>vars.drop.num</code>	The number of variables to exclude at each iteration.
<code>vars.drop.frac</code>	The fraction of variables, from those in the previous forest, to exclude at each iteration.
<code>whole.range</code>	If TRUE continue dropping variables until a forest with only two variables is built, and choose the best model from the complete series of models. If FALSE, stop the iterations if the current OOB error becomes larger than the initial OOB error (plus <code>c.sd*OOB</code> standard error) or if the current OOB error becomes larger than the previous OOB error (plus <code>c.sd*OOB</code> standard error).
<code>recompute.var.imp</code>	If TRUE recompute variable importances at each new iteration.
<code>verbose</code>	Give more information about what is being done.
<code>returnFirstForest</code>	If TRUE the random forest from the complete set of variables is returned.
<code>fitted.rf</code>	An (optional) object of class <code>randomForest</code> previously fitted. In this case, the <code>ntree</code> and <code>mtryFactor</code> arguments are obtained from the fitted object, not the arguments to this function.

**Details**

With the default parameters, we examine all forest that result from eliminating, iteratively, a fraction, `vars.drop.frac`, of the least important variables used in the previous iteration. By default, `vars.frac.drop = 0.2` which allows for relatively fast operation, is coherent with the idea of an “aggressive variable selection” approach, and increases the resolution as the number of variables considered becomes smaller. By default, we do not recalculate variable importances at each step (`recompute.var.imp = FALSE`) as Svetnik *et al.* 2004 mention severe overfitting resulting from recalculating variable importances. After fitting all forests, we examine the OOB error rates

from all the fitted random forests. We choose the solution with the smallest number of genes whose error rate is within `c.sd` standard errors of the minimum error rate of all forests. (The standard error is calculated using the expression for a binomial error count  $[\sqrt{p(1-p) * 1/N}]$ ). Setting `c.sd = 0` is the same as selecting the set of genes that leads to the smallest error rate. Setting `c.sd = 1` is similar to the common “1 s.e. rule”, used in the classification trees literature; this strategy can lead to solutions with fewer genes than selecting the solution with the smallest error rate, while achieving an error rate that is not different, within sampling error, from the “best solution”.

The use of `ntree = 5000` and `ntreeIterat = 2000` is discussed in longer detail in the references. Essentially, more iterations rarely seem to lead (with 9 different microarray data sets) to improved solutions.

The measure of variable importance used is based on the decrease of classification accuracy when values of a variable in a node of a tree are permuted randomly (see references); we use the unscaled version—see our paper and supplementary material.

## Value

An object of class "varSelRF": a list with components:

```

selec.history
    A data frame where the selection history is stored. The components are:
    Number.Variables The number of variables examined.
    Vars.in.Forest The actual variables that were in the forest at that stage.
    OOB Out of bag error rate.
    sd.OOB Standard deviation of the error rate.
rf.model The final, selected, random forest (only if whole.range = FALSE).
selected.vars
    The variables finally selected.
selected.model
    Same as above, but ordered alphabetically and concatenated with a "+" for easier
    display.
best.model.nvars
    The number of variables in the finally selected model.
initialImportance
    The importances of variables, before any variable deletion.
initialOrderedImportances
    Same as above but ordered in by decreasing importance.
ntree The ntree argument.
ntreeIterat The ntreeIterat argument.
mtryFactor The mtryFactor argument.
firstForest The first forest (before any variable selection) fitted.

```

## Author(s)

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## References

- Breiman, L. (2001) Random forests. *Machine Learning*, **45**, 5–32.
- Diaz-Uriarte, R. and Alvarez de Andres, S. (2005) Variable selection from random forests: application to gene expression data. Tech. report. <http://ligarto.org/rdiaz/Papers/rfVS/randomForestVarSel.html>
- Svetnik, V., Liaw, A. , Tong, C & Wang, T. (2004) Application of Breiman's random forest to modeling structure-activity relationships of pharmaceutical molecules. Pp. 334-343 in *F. Roli, J. Kittler, and T. Windeatt* (eds.). *Multiple Classifier Systems, Fifth International Workshop, MCS 2004*, Proceedings, 9-11 June 2004, Cagliari, Italy. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol. 3077. Berlin: Springer.

## See Also

[randomForest](#), [plot.varSelRF](#), [varSelRFBoot](#)

## Examples

```
x <- matrix(rnorm(25 * 30), ncol = 30)
x[1:10, 1:2] <- x[1:10, 1:2] + 2
cl <- factor(c(rep("A", 10), rep("B", 15)))

rf.vs1 <- varSelRF(x, cl, ntree = 200, ntreeIterat = 100,
                  vars.drop.frac = 0.2)

rf.vs1
plot(rf.vs1)
```

---

varSelRFBoot

*Bootstrap the variable selection procedure in varSelRF*

---

## Description

Use the bootstrap to estimate the prediction error rate (with the .632+ rule) and the stability of the variable selection procedure implemented in [varSelRF](#).

## Usage

```
varSelRFBoot(xdata, Class, c.sd = 1,
             mtryFactor = 1, ntree = 5000, ntreeIterat = 2000,
             vars.drop.frac = 0.2, bootnumber = 200,
             whole.range = TRUE,
             recompute.var.imp = FALSE,
             usingCluster = TRUE,
             TheCluster = NULL, srf = NULL, ...)
```

## Arguments

Most arguments are the same as for `varSelRFBoot`.

<code>xdata</code>	A data frame or matrix, with subjects/cases in rows and variables in columns. NAs not allowed.
<code>Class</code>	The dependent variable; must be a factor.
<code>c.sd</code>	The factor that multiplies the sd. to decide on stopping the iterations or choosing the final solution. See reference for details.
<code>mtryFactor</code>	The multiplication factor of $\sqrt{\text{number.of.variables}}$ for the number of variables to use for the <code>mtry</code> argument of <code>randomForest</code> .
<code>ntree</code>	The number of trees to use for the first forest; same as <code>ntree</code> for <code>randomForest</code> .
<code>ntreeIterat</code>	The number of trees to use ( <code>ntree</code> of <code>randomForest</code> ) for all additional forests.
<code>vars.drop.frac</code>	The fraction of variables, from those in the previous forest, to exclude at each iteration.
<code>whole.range</code>	If TRUE continue dropping variables until a forest with only two variables is built, and choose the best model from the complete series of models. If FALSE, stop the iterations if the current OOB error becomes larger than the initial OOB error (plus <code>c.sd*OOB</code> standard error) or if the current OOB error becomes larger than the previous OOB error (plus <code>c.sd*OOB</code> standard error).
<code>recompute.var.imp</code>	If TRUE recompute variable importances at each new iteration.
<code>bootnumber</code>	The number of bootstrap samples to draw.
<code>usingCluster</code>	If TRUE use a cluster to parallelize the calculations.
<code>TheCluster</code>	The name of the cluster, if one is used.
<code>srf</code>	An object of class <code>varSelRF</code> . If used, the <code>ntree</code> and <code>mtryFactor</code> parameters are taken from this object, not from the arguments to this function. If used, it allows to skip carrying out a first iteration to build the random forest to the complete, original data set.
<code>...</code>	Not used.

## Details

If a cluster is used for the calculations, it will be used for the embarrassingly parallelizable task of building as many random forests as bootstrap samples.

## Value

An object of class `varSelRFBoot`, which is a list with components:

<code>number.of.bootsamples</code>	The number of bootstrap replicates.
<code>bootstrap.pred.error</code>	The .632+ estimate of the prediction error.

<code>leave.one.out.bootstrap</code>	The leave-one-out estimate of the error rate (used when computing the .632+ estimate).
<code>all.data.randomForest</code>	A random forest built from all the data, but after the variable selection. Thus, beware because the OOB error rate is severely biased down.
<code>all.data.vars</code>	The variables selected in the run with all the data.
<code>all.data.run</code>	An object of class <code>varSelRF</code> ; the one obtained from a run of <code>varSelRF</code> on the original, complete, data set. See <code>varSelRF</code> .
<code>class.predictions</code>	The out-of-bag predictions from the bootstrap, of type "response". See <code>predict.randomForest</code> . This is an array, with dimensions number of cases by number of bootstrap replicates.
<code>prob.predictions</code>	The out-of-bag predictions from the bootstrap, of type "class probability". See <code>predict.randomForest</code> . This is a 3-way array; the last dimension is the bootstrap replication; for each bootstrap replication, the 2D array has dimensions case by number of classes, and each value is the probability of belonging to that class.
<code>number.of.vars</code>	A vector with the number of variables selected for each bootstrap sample.
<code>overlap</code>	The "overlap" between the variables selected from the run in original sample and the variables returned from a bootstrap sample. Overlap between the sets of variables A and B is defined as $\frac{ variables.in.A \cap variables.in.B }{\sqrt{ variables.in.A   variables.in.B }}$ or size (cardinality) of intersection between the two sets / sqrt(product of size of each set).
<code>all.vars.in.solutions</code>	A vector with all the genes selected in the runs on all the bootstrap samples. If the same gene is selected in several bootstrap runs, it appears multiple times in this vector.
<code>all.solutions</code>	Each solutions is a character vector with all the variables in a particular solution concatenated by a "+". Thus, <code>all.solutions</code> is a vector, with length equal to <code>number.of.bootsamples</code> , of the solution from each bootstrap run.
<code>Class</code>	The original class argument.
<code>allBootRuns</code>	A list of length <code>number.of.bootsamples</code> . Each component of this list is an element of class <code>varSelRF</code> and stores the results from the runs on each bootstrap sample.

### Note

The out-of-bag predictions stored in `class.predictions` and `prob.predictions` are NOT the OOB votes from random forest itself for a given run. These are predictions from the out-of-bag samples for each bootstrap replication. Thus, these are samples that have not been used at all in any of the variable selection procedures in the given bootstrap replication.

**Author(s)**

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**References**

- Breiman, L. (2001) Random forests. *Machine Learning*, **45**, 5–32.
- Diaz-Uriarte, R. and Alvarez de Andres, S. (2005) Variable selection from random forests: application to gene expression data. Tech. report. <http://ligarto.org/rdiaz/Papers/rfVS/randomForestVarSel.html>
- Efron, B. & Tibshirani, R. J. (1997) Improvements on cross-validation: the .632+ bootstrap method. *J. American Statistical Association*, **92**, 548–560.
- Svetnik, V., Liaw, A. , Tong, C & Wang, T. (2004) Application of Breiman’s random forest to modeling structure-activity relationships of pharmaceutical molecules. Pp. 334-343 in *F. Roli, J. Kittler, and T. Windeatt* (eds.). *Multiple Classifier Systems, Fifth International Workshop, MCS 2004*, Proceedings, 9-11 June 2004, Cagliari, Italy. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol. 3077. Berlin: Springer.

**See Also**

[randomForest](#), [varSelRF](#), [summary.varSelRFBoot](#), [plot.varSelRFBoot](#),

**Examples**

```
## Not run:
## This is a small example, but can take some time.

x <- matrix(rnorm(25 * 30), ncol = 30)
x[1:10, 1:2] <- x[1:10, 1:2] + 2
cl <- factor(c(rep("A", 10), rep("B", 15)))

rf.vsl <- varSelRF(x, cl, ntree = 200, ntreeIterat = 100,
                 vars.drop.frac = 0.2)
rf.vsb <- varSelRFBoot(x, cl,
                     bootnumber = 10,
                     usingCluster = FALSE,
                     srf = rf.vsl)

rf.vsb
summary(rf.vsb)
plot(rf.vsb)
## End(Not run)
```

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