

Eastern White Pine *Pinus Strobus*

As the leaves of deciduous trees disappear, look to native conifers to add beauty and interest to your winter landscape...

The Eastern White Pine is one of our most magnificent native trees, with a straight trunk and crown of lateral branches, reaching heights of up to 110 feet and a trunk diameter of 4 feet. From a distance, this pine is distinguished by whorled spreading branches, with slightly upturned tips, giving the tree its picturesque asymmetrical or "windblown" look. Up close, look at its needles: It has soft, bluish-green needles, 2 - 5 inches long, and is the only native pine with its needles bundled in groups of 5. The cones, which mature at the end of a second season, are 4-8 inches long, narrow and slightly curved. The bark on young branches is smooth and greenish-brown; becoming dark gray, rough, and furrowed as a tree ages.

The White Pine is the largest conifer in eastern North America. In colonial times, the tallest were known as mast pines and reserved by agents of the Crown for the British Royal Navy. This was a point of contention among the colonists and played a role in events leading to the American Revolution. Native Americans used the inner bark of the White Pine as emergency food during winter. They also used the sap to waterproof baskets, pails and canoes. Today, White Pine is used for interior trim, intricate carpentry, telephone poles, and Christmas trees.

The cone seeds of White Pines are eagerly sought out by squirrels, chipmunks, mice, and songbirds. The inner bark is a preferred winter food of porcupine, and white-tailed deer and rabbits browse the foliage. White Pines, especially those with broken tops, provide valuable cavity-nesting for wildlife. They are a favorite nesting choice of Bald Eagles, and Black Bear cubs are known to climb them to escape predation.

The White Pine is the state tree of Michigan, which is apropos since our state contains some of the few remaining virgin stands. These include Hartwick Pines State Park in the lower peninsula; and the Huron Mountains, Estivant Pines, Porcupine Mountains State Park, and the Sylvania Wilderness Area in the upper peninsula. Mature White Pines can easily be 200 to 250 years old. In Michigan, we have individuals dated over 400 years. In landscaping, White Pines may be used as a focal point, screen, or along borders. They are easily transplanted and grown, preferring moist, well-drained, slightly acidic soil. They are not, however, well-adapted to urban stresses such as salt spray from roads or air pollution, and can suffer damage from strong wind and heavy snows. More photos and information on the Eastern White Pine are available at:

<http://www.rook.org/earl/bwca/nature/trees/pinusstrob.html>

<http://www.tnloghomes.com/SpecialPages/Eastern-White-Pine.aspx>

<http://www.hort.uconn.edu/plants/p/pinstr/pinstr1.html>

http://www.hcs.ohio-state.edu/plantlist/description/pi_robust.html