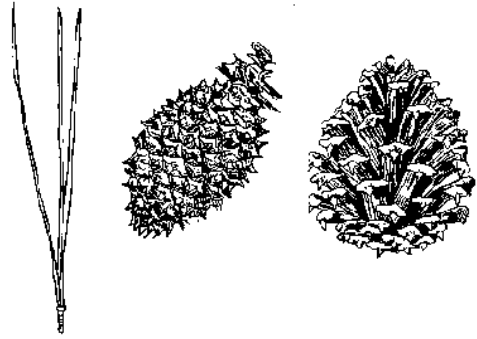


# Maine Tree Species Fact Sheet

**Common Name:** Pitch Pine

**Botanical Name:** *Pinus rigida*

**Tree Type:** Coniferous



<http://www.dcmr.state.pa.us/FORESTRY.com>  
[montr/images/PitchPine.gif](http://montr/images/PitchPine.gif)

## **Physical Description:**

**Growth Habit:** Pitch pine is a medium to large tree that grows in poor, sandy soils in dry areas. The bark is rough, reddish-brown to gray and in scaly plates. The 3-5 inch long needles are stout, stiff, dark yellow-green in clusters of 3 and stand at right angles to the branch. This is the only native pine that will produce “sprout” growth when apparently killed by such factor as fire.

**Height:** Pitch pine reaches a height of 30-40 feet with a trunk diameter of 1-2 feet. This species is hardy to zone 4.

**Shape:** The branches form an open crown and are often contorted in shape. Branches grow horizontally from the trunk in a somewhat ragged pattern. The trunk tapers rapidly and is somewhat straight

## **Fruit/Seed Description/Dispersal Methods:**

The cones are often produced in clusters. They are egg-shaped and 1 ½ - 3 ½ inches long with a sharp, curved prickle on the tip of each scale. The base of the cone is flat when the cone is completely opened. The cones take 2 years to mature and then open during winter and disperse seeds over several years.

## **Range within Maine:**

The pitch pine is a native tree in Maine. It grows on disturbed, sandy, or gravelly soils, in sunny, dry areas. This tree is commonly found in the southern part of the state in sandy plains near Brunswick and Oxford and on Mt. Desert Island. It does not grow in Piscataquis, Aroostook, Somerset, or Washington Counties.

## **Distinguishing Features:**

The pitch pine is the only 3-needled pine found in the North. Needles are usually twisted and grow at right angles to the branchlets. Needles can also grow in tufts from the trunk.

## **Interesting Facts:**

The wood is moderately heavy and strong and is used to produce lumber and wood pulp. The cones are used for decorating wreaths. The wood is good for kindling, but only fair as firewood. Early in our history, tar and turpentine were obtained from this tree.

## **Relationship to Wildlife:**

Pitch pine provides an excellent habitat for wildlife and songbirds.

## **Landscape Use:**

Pitch pine is not considered a prime tree for landscaping around the home unless the soil is particularly sandy or gravelly.

## **Common Problems or Pests of the Tree in Maine:**

Pitch pine is susceptible to several fungi, but they usually do not cause serious or extensive damage. Needle rusts and twig cankers can also be a problem. Pitch pine is also attacked by many insects including tip moths, the pitch pine looper, sawflies, the southern pine beetle, *the* pine webworm, and the pine needleminer.

## **References:**

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*The Tree Identification Book.* Symonds, George W.D. and Stephen V. Chelminski (photographer). William Morrow & Co., Inc. 1958.

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