

# Maine Tree Species Fact Sheet

**Common Name:** White Pine (Eastern White Pine, Northern White Pine, Soft Pine, Weymouth Pine)

**Botanical Name:** *Pinus strobus*

**Tree Type:** Coniferous

## **Physical Description:**

**Growth Habit:** The white pine is a tall upland tree with relatively few large limbs in horizontal whorls. The bark of young trees is smooth and thin, and green with a reddish brown tinge over-all or brown in spots. On old trees the bark is 1-2 inches thick, very dark and divided into broad, flat ridges by shallow fissures. The leaves are in clusters of 5, flexible, from 3-5 inches long, bluish green in color, but whitish on one side. White pine prefers well-drained soils and a cool humid climate. The tree grows rapidly in both height and diameter, making an average height growth of a foot per year.

**Height:** White pines reach an average height of 80-100 feet, with a trunk diameter of 1-3 feet. This species is hardy in Zones 3-8.

**Shape:** The white pine is symmetrical and conical in outline with a spread of 20-40 feet.

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

The white pine is monoecious. Pollen bearing flowers are clustered in small cones at the base of new growth. The bright red seed-producing flowers occur on other twigs. The cones are 4-8" long and tapering, cylindrical, thornless, and borne on a long stalk. Cone production begins when the tree is 5-10 years old, but good seed production does not occur until the tree is 20-30 years old. The seeds germinate in spring. The cones ripen and seeds are dispersed from August - September. Seed dispersal is done primarily by the wind, however animals also disperse seeds.

## **Range within Maine:**

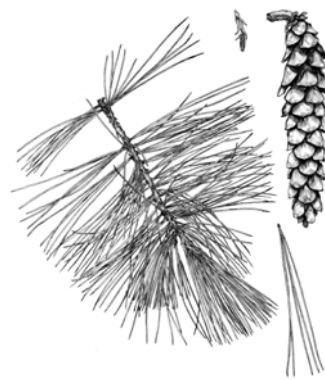
White pine occurs throughout the state in partial shade to full-sun, in moist situations, on uplands, and on sandy soil. It develops best on fertile, well-drained soils.

## **Distinguishing Features:**

White pine is the only five-needled pine in the eastern U.S. and Canada. Another distinguishing feature is its long, limber cone.

## **Interesting Facts:**

White pine wood is soft, and easily worked, but not strong. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was a valued source for naval stores. Native Americans were also known to use the inner bark as an emergency food source. Today, white pine produces the most valuable softwood lumber in North



America. It is used to make furniture, pulp, telephone poles, interior trims, doors, windows, cabinets, boards for coffins, crates, boxes and boats, and for Christmas trees.

### **Relationship to Wildlife:**

Various birds, animals including squirrels, chipmunks, deer, porcupine and rabbits use white pine as a food source. Bald eagles will build their nests near the top of the trees, other birds and animals will nest in its cavity, and young black bears will climb them for safety.

### **Landscape Use:**

The white pine does not tolerate air pollution, heat, drought or salt. Therefore, it is not a good plant for city conditions or along roads. It is useful in parks and large areas.

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

White pine is prone to white pine blister rust, a fungus that attacks the inner bark and white pine weevil, an insect that kills the top most shoot. It is also highly susceptible to wind and ice damage.

### **References:**

*A Boundary Waters Compendium:* (December 2001)

[www.rook.org/earl/bwca/nature/trees/pinusstrob.html](http://www.rook.org/earl/bwca/nature/trees/pinusstrob.html)

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*The Peterson Field Guide Series: A Field Guide to Eastern Forests.* Kricher, John C. Houghton Mifflin Co. 1988.



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