

*Pinus banksiana*

[Synonyms : *Pinus divaricata*, *Pinus hudsonica*, *Pinus sylvestris* var. *divaricata*]

**FOXTAIL PINE** is an evergreen tree. Native to north-eastern North America it has needle-like leaves and small oval, yellowish-brown cones.

It is also known as *Banksianatall* (Swedish), *Banksfyr* (Danish), Banksian pine, *Banks-Kiefer* (German), Banks pine, Black jack pine, Black pine, *Borovica banksova* (Slovak), *Borovice banksova* (Czech), British Honduras pitch pine, Bull pine, Canada horn-cone pine, Canada horn pine, Canadian horn pine, Check pine, Cypress, Eastern jack-pine, Gray pine, Grey pine, Hudson Bay pine, Jack pine, Juniper, Labrador pine, Northern scrub pine, Prince's pine, Princess pine, Scrub pine, Sir Joseph Banks' pine, Spruce pine, and *Struikden* (German).

The flowers are pollinated by wind. The cones usually remain closed until the heat of fire opens them to release the seeds.

Warning – continued contact with the fresh wood may cause dermatitis and allergic breathing problems.

The tree is protected in the wild as it is considered to be rare in the states of Indiana and New York, threatened in New Hampshire and Vermont and endangered in Illinois in the United States.

*Banksiana* commemorates an English botanist, explorer and plant collector, Sir Joseph Banks (1744-1820). In 1766, as an independent naturalist, he collected plants, animals and rocks in Labrador and Newfoundland. Then he led a team of scientists who accompanied Captain James Cook on his 1768-1771 Expedition which, not only observed the transit of Venus across the sun in Tahiti but also circumnavigated the world, exploring the South Pacific via South America and Tahiti, and visiting New Zealand, Australia and Java (now part of Indonesia). This time he not only collected more specimens (including plants, insects, shells and artefacts) but also made equally extensive botanical and ethnographic observations and notes and compiled vocabularies, not least in anticipation of future European settlement and commerce. His accounts of the Expedition's exploits and sightings on his return, and his scientific approach, drew Europe-wide attention, while many of his latest plant specimens (about 110 new genera and 1300 new species) would expand his herbarium dramatically in his subsequent London home at Soho Square. Banks' third significant expedition, to Iceland (and the Hebrides and Orkneys), occurred in 1772 and he returned home with yet more specimens. 1773 saw him become unofficial director of the Royal Gardens at Kew and he sent plant collectors (most of eventual high repute) to most continents. As a Privy Councillor from 1797 he was involved in matters of state (including colonization and agriculture). It was he who suggested Botany Bay as a suitable site for a penal colony in Australia and later encouraged more examination of the natural history of the Sydney environs (as a result of which further specimens were shipped to England). He was also considered to be the authority, during his lifetime, on all matters relating to New South Wales. He served on various committees (some of which he chaired) and he became a Trustee of The British Museum. He helped organise or advised on most British voyages, was a patron of science, opened his ever-growing personal herbarium and library to known scientists and researchers, and corresponded

worldwide.. He was a a Freemason and member of many other bodies, including the Dilettante Society, the Horticultural Society. the Linnean Society of London, the Royal Institution, Institut de France and of the Society of Antiquaries of London. He became a Fellow of The Royal Society in 1766 and its President from 1778 to 1820. In 1781 he was made a baronet and in 1795 a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath. His name has been given to several places in the world, including the Banks Peninsula in New Zealand and the Canadian Banks Island.

Some of the North American Cree Indians harvested the inner bark for food.

The processed roots provided sewing thread for heavy items such as canoes or wigwam roofs for the Potawatomi, some of the Chippewa and the Menominee Indians. Some of the Cree tribe used dry open cones as a tanning ingredient and some of the Chippewa Indians cut boughs for bedding.

Resin was used by both the Potawatomi and some of the Algonkin tribes for caulking canoe seams. The Potawatomi put pitch on their torches for lighting when night fishing.

Foxtail pine was a source of medicine for several North American Indian tribes including the Menominee. It was used as a stimulant by the Potawatomi and some of the Chippewa, and the latter also prescribed it for treating convulsions. It was applied to deep cuts by some of the Cree Indians, and it provided a remedy for some lung problems for the Potawatomi.

Locally roasted, fried or pickled young cones and their nearly black seeds have provided food. Stands of the tree are a source of food and shelter for a wide range of birds and animals, and one endangered species of warbler is only associated with foxtail pine barrens. Certainly records show that porcupines will eat the bark, some squirrels (including chipmunks), mice and voles eat the seeds and the trees are sheltered in and sometimes browsed by caribou, moose, deer generally and hare.

The moderately hard, light brown to orange wood has been processed for pulp and it has also been made into pallets and burnt as fuel. It has also provided material for mine supports (and occasionally railway sleepers), as well as for telephone poles, boxes, fencing and barrels.

This is one of quite a few trees that are cultivated for the Christmas tree market.

Some authorities note that stands of foxtail pine help to stabilize watersheds.

It is a provincial emblem for the Northwest Territories in Canada.