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Pinus glabra

SPRUCE PINE is an evergreen tree. Native to south-eastern United States it has needle-like leaves and small, pale reddish-brown cones.

It is also known as Black pine, Bottom white pine, Cedar pine, Kings-tree, Lowland spruce pine, Poor pine, Smooth bark, Southern white pine, Spruce lowland pine, Walter's pine, and White pine.

The flowers are pollinated by wind.

Warning – prolonged contact with the fresh wood can cause dermatitis and allergic breathing problems.

Glabra is Latin (hairless, bald) meaning hairless or smooth'.

The common name Walter's pine celebrates Thomas Walter (1740-1789) who was an American botanist from the southern states who described the species in 1788.

The Cherokee North American Indian tribe used the gum or needles to scent their soap.

Records suggest that it was a valuable source of medicine for the Cherokee. They used various parts of it to treat lung ailments, tuberculosis, colds, fever, female ailments, kidney problems, measles, mumps, wind, venereal disease, piles, worms, rheumatism, gout and skin disorders generally. It was also prescribed in one form or another as a laxative, sedative and stimulant.

Like close relatives spruce pine offers a general source of food and shelter for wildlife but in particular for certain birds and squirrels that especially enjoy the darkly mottled, brown seeds.

Occasionally the tree has been cultivated as an ornamental plant and shade tree.

According to some authorities the very heavy, strong and hard reddish-brown wood has been used for construction (including bridges and docks), pulp, and fuel, and has also been used for building interiors. When preserved it has provided material for railway sleepers, piling, mine supports, and poles as well – and it has been made into crates and boxes too. Some authorities especially mark its use today for manufacturing plywood as well. In contrast to foregoing however there are other authorities that refer to its tendency to brittleness and its lack of durability which they say has made it unsuitable for any applications beyond general carpentry and pulping – and a common recognition of its value for the Christmas tree trade. (The latter records make one wonder how those bridges and docks, let alone any other demanding application, have been serviceable if they have been made of this wood.)