

*Pinus muricata*

[Synonyms : *Pinus edgariana*, *Pinus muricata* var. *anthonyi*, *Pinus muricata* var. *borealis*, *Pinus muricata* var. *cedrosensis*, *Pinus muricata* var. *remorata*, *Pinus muricata* var. *stantonii*, *Pinus radiata* var. *binata*, *Pinus remorata*]

**BISHOP PINE** is an evergreen tree. Native to south-western United States (particularly California) it has needle-like leaves and heavy, glossy deep reddish-brown cones. It is also known as Bishop's pine, Bull pine, California swamp pine, Dwarf marine pine, Obispo pine, Pitch pine, Prickle-cone pine, Santa Cruz Island pine, and Umbrella pine. The flowers are pollinated by wind. Reminiscent of knobcone pine (*Pinus attenuata*) the base of some cones (they can take as much as 15 years to open and can then stay on the tree for a similar period) can become embedded within the expanding trunk.

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

*Muricata* means 'sharp-spined or with roughened surface with hard points' with reference to the cones' scales.

The name Obispo pine is said to commemorate the name of the mission of San Luis Obispo in Alta California near the place where this species was discovered in 1835 by the Irish botanist, Thomas Coulter (1793-1843).

Some of the Pomo North American Indians ate the small fresh brownish-black nuts and also dried them for Winter food.

The Pomo Indians burnt the strong, hard and lightweight wood as fuel and used the roots for basketry. Some of the tribe applied the pitch as an adhesive and made the roots into fish traps.

Some authorities today recommend the wood for paper pulp.

Bishop pine has been cultivated in areas subject to erosion and is also claimed to have been effective in stabilising sand dunes. It has been cultivated as a windbreak and ornamental hedging too.

Apparently the spiny cones deter much wildlife although some squirrels are believed to show limited determination in gathering the seeds. But on Santa Cruz Island, off the eastern coast of southern California, exotic sheep have browsed intensively and the tree is now said to be endangered there.