

### *Pinus nigra*

[Synonyms : *Pinus austriaca*, *Pinus laricio*, *Pinus laricio* var. *austriaca*, *Pinus nigra austriaca*, *Pinus nigra* f. *hornibrookiana*, *Pinus nigra* subsp. *nigra*, *Pinus nigra* f. *pyramidalis*, *Pinus nigricans*]

**AUSTRIAN PINE** is an evergreen tree. Native to south-eastern Europe and south-western Asia, it has needle-like leaves and small, glossy yellowish-brown cones

It is also known as Austrian black pine, Black pine, *Borovica čierna* (Slovak), *Borovice černá* (Czech), *Cheren Bor* (Bulgarian), Corsican pine, Crimean pine, *Crni Bor* (Serbian), European black pine, Fir, *Karaçam* (Turkish), *Kiefer* (German), *Pin negru* (Rumanian), *Pin noir d'Autriche* (French), *Pino d'Austria* (Italian), *Pino nero* (Italian), *Pino nigra* (Esperanto), *Pinwydden Awstria* (Welsh), Pyrenees pine, *Schwarzföhre* (German), *Schwarzkiefer* (German), *Sortfyr* (Danish), and *Svarttall* (Swedish).

The flowers are pollinated by the wind.

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

Austrian pine can be extremely invasive when introduced outside its native habitat.

*Nigra* means 'black' with reference to the bark.

The rough wood has been used for general carpentry and for making furniture. During the Second World War the English used it for pit props and boarding.

It is cultivated extensively as an ornamental in Europe and North America (familiar on some golf courses, gracing some commercial establishments and offering some town planners a street tree). It also serves as a Christmas tree. In more practical mode Austrian pine has been grown in many places for shelter. One of the most striking examples must be the eastern Great Plains of the United States. Records show that from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the tree began to become a familiar sight on the treeless prairies where it was cultivated (often with ponderosa pine, *Pinus ponderosa*) to provide shelter from wind, heavy snow and ice. In complete contrast and as an illustration of its ability to tolerate a wide range of habitat, it has also proved to be useful in stabilising sand dunes.

Its sap is the source of Austrian turpentine that is used in ointments and plasters.

Austrian pine was introduced both to Britain and to North America in 1759.

One of these trees growing in the University Botanical Gardens in Oxford is said to have been a favourite of the South African born, British philologist and writer, J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973). Apart from his scholarly works he is known to the wider public for *The Lord of the Rings* and associated writings – and one of the more familiar photographs of him, taken when he was living in Merton Street, shows him sitting against this pine.

Authorities note that the tiny, dark grey or reddish-brown seeds seem to be especially enjoyed by songbirds. Apart from this the trees offer shelter to a wide range of wildlife particularly in Winter.

The wood has been used primarily in its native habitat for veneering, and general construction. It has also provided material for posts and poles- and has been burnt as fuel.