Pinus pinaster

[Synonyms : *Pinus hamiltonii*, *Pinus maritima*, *Pinus mesogeensis*, *Pinus nigra* f. *pygmaea*, *Pinus sylvestris* var. *mongolica*, *Pinus syrtica*]

MARITIME PINE is an evergreen tree. Native to the Mediterranean it has needle-like leaves and glossy reddish-brown cones.

It is also known as *Borovice hvězdovitá* (Czech), *Borovice přímořská* (Czech), Bournemouth pine tree, Cluster pine, *Föhre* (German), French turpentine, *Igelföhre* (German), *Meerkiefer* (German), Pinaster, *Pinastre* (French), *Pinastro* (Esperanto, Italian), *Pinheiro bravo* (Portuguese), *Pin maritime* (French), *Pino* (Spanish), *Pino marittimo* (Italian), *Pinwydden Arfor* (Welsh), Sea pine, *Seekiefer* (German), *Seestrandföhre* (German), Star pine, *Sternkiefer* (German), *Strandfura* (Swedish), *Strandfyr* (Danish), *Strandkiefer* (German), and *Strandtall* (Swedish).

The flowers are pollinated by the wind.

This tree is an important European source of resin and turpentine. Centred on Bordeaux (a major port in south-western France) the turpentine originating from it is often known as Bordeaux turpentine, French turpentine or French oil turpentine.

In Hawaii and in South Africa (in the south and south-western Cape) the tree has been declared an invasive weed. In South Africa its growth is only allowed there now for commercial reasons and only in designated or controlled areas.

Pinaster is made up of a Latin name for wild pine and *-aster* components meaning this species is inferior to a cultivated pine.

Maritme pine has been cultivated where sand dunes need to be stabilised or windbreaks are desirable. It has often been chosen for reforestation programmes – and perhaps the most striking example of this and certainly the most extensive is to be found at Les Landes on the French south-western Atlantic coast. It is claimed as the largest man-made forest and covers an incredible 2½ million acres. According to some authorities it was started in 1789 when the powers that be wanted to protect fertile farmland from the neighouring and threatening shifting sand dunes. Other authorities suggest that it was established in the following century under orders from Napoleon III (1808-1873) to improve the air and soil in that region. Whichever is correct it is still maintained today but now not only for wood production.

Going back to the mid-16th Century the French navigator Jacques Cartier (1491-1557) is said to have owed his life to local North American Indians. Between 1534 and 1541 he had been seeking a westerly route to Asia and not only discovered the St. Lawrence River but also succumbed to scurvy. Fortunately he was offered a pine bark and needle tea used as a cure by local Indian tribes and recovered to continue his exploration. In the mid-20th Century over 400 years later French scientists began to investigate the drugs which effected this cure and ultimately identified an important source of them in the bark of maritime pine – and then realised the medicinal potential sitting in Les Landes. Now as a by-product of wood production from that vast area the bark is processed to extract the valuable drugs.

Maritime pine has actually been cultivated quite widely in commercial plantations. On southern and south-western European shores it is a familiar sight grown there for the turpentine

and other products obtained from the sap. Towards the end of the 20th Century pine plantations of this species were gaining popularity in Western Australia too – in fact its success has been such that it seems southern Australia has been considering whether to follow suit..

The strong yellowish-brown wood has been used for veneering and rough carpentry, and the manufacture of boarding and paper pulp. It has also been made into pit-props and boxes.

The attractive cones have been sold widely for Christmas decorations.