

*Pinus resinosa*

**RED PINE** is an evergreen tree. Native to eastern North America it has needle-like leaves and small shiny orange-brown cones.

It is also known as American red pine, *Borovice smolná* (Czech), Canadian pine, Canadian red pine, Eastern red pine, Hard pine, Northern pine, Norway pine, Ottawa red pine, Pig iron pine, Pitch pine, Quebec pine, Red deal pine, *Rot-Kiefer* (German), Shellbark Norway pine, Yellow deal, and Yellow pine.

The leaves smell strongly of lemon balm. The flowers are pollinated by the wind.

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

Red pine is considered to be an endangered species in Connecticut, Illinois and New Jersey in the United States and is protected in those states.

*Resinosa* is derived from Latin *resina* (resin) and *-fer* (bearing, carrying) components.

The common name Norway pine is said to be laid at the doors of early English explorers who, it is told, continually confused the red pine with the Norway spruce (*Picea abies*).

The resin was used by some of the North American Chippewa Indians for mending birch bark roofs and for caulking the seams of their canoes.

The tree was recognized as a source of medicine by several North American Indian tribes. It offered a stimulant for the Potawatomi and some of the Chippewa Indians (who also used it for treating headaches and backache) – and some of the Algonkin tribe applied it in chest poultices for easing colds.

Bark has been used for tanning leather.

The relatively hard, pale red to reddish brown wood has provided material for paper pulp and for general and building construction, bridges, piling and flooring. It has also been used for making railway sleepers, pit props, masts, poles and scaffolding, as well as garden furniture, toys and various household items. (It is interesting to note that this tree must have been especially popular for ships' masts as the trunks were being exported to the British Navy as late as 1875.)

Apart from being cultivated as windbreaks and ornamental trees, red pines have also been popular as Christmas trees and the remaining stumps have offered a source of turpentine and rosin. It is perhaps surprising to note that these trees, which have been used widely in reforestation programmes, have also been chosen by environmentalists for the control of sand dunes on the one hand and snowdrifts on the other.

The bill naming red pine as an emblem for Minnesota in the United States was signed by the State Governor on 18<sup>th</sup> February, 1953.

Young growth is unsafe from deer as they browse it and short seedlings are similarly vulnerable from the attentions of hares. Squirrels, mice, and birds (such as some types of grouse and finches) all enjoy the tiny, mottled brown seeds – and some kinds of robins and doves actually choose to nest in the trees. Yet there is a general belief according to authorities that these trees offer poor habitat particularly for game birds and animals.

Medicinally, local herbalists have applied poultices of the inner bark to inflamed wounds, sores and ulcers.