

*Pinus thunbergii*

[Synonyms : *Pinus massoniana*, *Pinus thunbergiana*]

**JAPANESE BLACK PINE** is an evergreen tree. Native to Japan it has needle-like leaves and small greenish-brown cones.

It is also known as Black pine, *Borovice thunbergova* (Czech), *Kuromatsu* (Japanese), *Thông đuôi ngựa* (Vietnamese) and *Thunbergs Kiefer* (German).

Authorities note that this species is especially tolerant of salty winds. The flowers are pollinated by the wind.

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

*Thunbergii* commemorates a Swedish naturalist, Carl Per Thunberg (1743-1828), who after collecting plants in Japan eventually became a professor of botany and natural history at Uppsala in Sweden. He was a pupil of the Swedish naturalist and physician, Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778). In 1771 he was employed as ship's surgeon by the Dutch East India Company and he sailed to Cape Town where, during the next three years, he learnt Dutch, collected specimens of flora and fauna on three expeditions and became a doctor of medicine. He resumed his journey to Japan, staying on the way for two months at Batavia (now Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia) and he arrived at the Company's trading post in the Bay of Nagasaki in 1775 where he assumed the post of head surgeon. Japanese restrictions at that time precluded any but Dutch vessels docking there and the movements of Dutch protestant merchants in the Country were curtailed. Despite this Thunberg collected Japanese plants ashore and also received new specimens from interpreters. From these he prepared the first detailed *Flora Japonica*. He returned to Europe in 1776 via Java and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) where, in the latter particularly, he collected many plants, eventually arriving in Sweden in 1779. In 1781 he was appointed professor at Uppsala. Thunberg was a member of many scientific bodies, by no means confined to Sweden. His published works include, apart from *Flora Japonica*, *Voyages de C.P. Thunberg au Japon par le Cap de Bonne-Espérance, les Isles de la Sonde, etc.*, *D. D. Dissertatio entomologica sistens Insecta Suecica*, and *Flora Capensis*.

The tree was introduced to North America in 1855.

Japanese bonsai specialists have included this tree in their repertoire for hundreds of years. It is a familiar sight growing in Japanese parks and formal gardens and today it is also cultivated as an ornamental or screening plant in other countries, including in Europe and North America.