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Pinus torreyana

[Synonyms : *Pinus lophosperma*, *Pinus torreyana* var. *insularis*]

TORREY PINE is an evergreen tree. Native to southern California in the south-western United States it has needle-like leaves and small heavy, glossy brown cones.

It is also known as *Borovice torreyova* (Czech), Del Mar pine, Island Torrey pine, Lone pine, Santa Rosa Island Torrey pine, *Soledad-Kiefer* (German), Soledad pine, and Torrey's pine.

The flowers are pollinated by the wind. There are two small brown seeds under each scale and one cone can hold as many as 100 seeds.

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

The tree is rare in the wild in the United States and is protected there.

Torreyana commemorates a celebrated American chemist, physician, botanist and writer, Dr. John Torrey (1796-1873). Although he made a living primarily as a Professor of Chemistry his prime interest was always botany. He taught chemistry (with mineralogy and geology) from 1824-1827 at the United States Military Academy, West Point, from 1827-1853 through the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York (now part of Columbia University Medical Center) and at the same time (with botany) from 1832 at New York University. Additionally from 1853 until 1873 he was Assayer of the New York Mint. Despite his professional duties, he managed to compile, collaborate in and write many important works, including *A Catalog of the Plants Growing Within Thirty Miles of New York*, *A Compendium of the Flora of the Northern and Middle States* and in collaboration with his then student (and later colleague and lifelong friend who would become an acclaimed American botanist), Asa Gray (1810-1888), the earlier sections of *Flora of North America*. He adopted the English John Lindley's classification system of arranging plants by families instead of the by then widely used Linnaeus model and described hundred of plant specimens collected by many of the plant explorers in North America. He was not only a President of AAAS (The American Association for the Advancement of Science) and, on two occasions, President of NYAS (New York Academy of Sciences then known as Lyceum of Natural History of New York) but also founder the Torrey Botanical Club (now the Torrey Botanical Society).

North American Cherokee Indians not only used the soft and brittle wood for construction but also for making their 30-40 ft. long canoes – and for carving as well.

The nutritious nutty-tasting seeds (which were once an important part of the diet of local North American Indian tribes) are eaten today locally raw or roasted.

The tree is cultivated widely as an ornamental plant.

Wildlife usually birds and rodents eat the seeds. In fact some authorities ponder whether one particular kind of rat has significantly contributed to the tree's rarity (aside from the onslaught of drought, fire and beetles) by gorging on the seeds and undermining the tree's regeneration.