

*Pinus virginiana*

[Synonyms : *Pinus inops*, *Pinus mitis*]

**VIRGINIA PINE** is an evergreen tree. Native to the eastern United States it has needle-like leaves and small, yellowish-beige to reddish-brown cones.

It is also known as Alligator pine, Bastard pine, Black pine, *Borovice virginská* (Czech), Cedar pine, Hickory pine, Jack pine, Jersey pine, New Jersey pine, North Carolina pine, Oldfield pine, Poor pine, Possum pine, Poverty pine, River pine, Scrub pine, Shortleaf pine, Shortleaved pine, Short shucks, Shortstraw pine, Spruce, Spruce pine, *Virginiakiefer* (German), and *Virginsk fyr* (Danish).

The flowers are pollinated by wind.

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

The tree has been declared an endangered species in New York state in the United States.

*Virginiana* means 'of or from Virginia (United States)' which itself was named after the English 'Virgin Queen' Elizabeth I (1533-1603). The common name 'scrub pine' acknowledges the tree's ability to grow in poor soil.

The Cherokee North American Indians used the gum or the needles to scent soap.

From records it seems that the tree was probably in greatest medicinal demand among the Cherokee. They used it to treat fever, measles, tuberculosis, coughs, colds, wind, female problems, piles, venereal disease and rheumatism. In addition the Cherokee also used it as a laxative and as both a stimulant and sedative. They and the Choctaw Indians used Virginia pine to treat worms, and (like the Rappahannock) the Cherokee used it as a remedy for some kidney complaints.

Its durable and soft, orange to brown wood has been used for rough construction work, for manufacturing pulp (said to be its most important application today) and for building interiors. It has been made into railway sleepers, pit-props and has also been burnt as fuel.

Virginia pine is cultivated as a Christmas tree in the south-eastern United States.

Environmentalists grow the tree too in reforestation programmes, especially on mine spoils (coal and manganese among them).

The trees offer habitat and cover for many animals and birds. Deer and other wild animals browse on the foliage, and the tiny, dark mottled, pale brown seeds are relished by small mammals and birds