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Pinus wallichiana

[Synonyms : *Pinus chylla*, *Pinus excelsa*, *Pinus griffithii*, *Pinus nepalensis*]

BHUTAN PINE is an evergreen tree. Native to the Himalayas (from Afghanistan to south-eastern Tibet) it has needle-like leaves and large, white-resined, dark brown cones.

It is also known as Blue pine, *Borovice himálajská* (Czech), *Himalaja-fyr* (Danish), Himalayan blue pine, Himalayan pine, Himalayan white pine, *Kail* (Hindi), *Pin de l'Himalaya* (French), *Pin pleureur de l'Himalaya* (French), and *Tränen-Kiefer* (German).

The flowers are pollinated by the wind.

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

Wallichiana commemorates a Danish botanist, physician and plant collector, Nathaniel Wallich (1786-1856), who was professor of botany at Calcutta Medical College 1837-1838. In late 1807 he started work as surgeon at a Danish settlement in Bengal only to be imprisoned by the British in 1808 when they took the town (because of Danish-Napoleonic allegiance). Wallich's growing interest in Indian flora led to a post in Calcutta in 1809 as assistant to the British East India Company's Scottish botanist and physician, William Roxburgh (1751-1815) at the Royal Botanic Garden. Wallich had become a member of the Asiatic Society and in 1814 (to 1819) he became the first Honorary Curator of their Oriental Museum and its Superintendent. At about the same period he was in charge, temporarily, of the Calcutta botanic garden. This position was formalised when he became Director there in 1817 until his retirement to London due to deteriorating health in 1846. He made many botanical expeditions in the region, built very large collections of Indian and Burmese specimens particularly, and described and catalogued thousands of plants. However authorities repeatedly emphasise his assistance to other plant collectors passing through Calcutta and too his record of unspoilt plant material shipped to Europe and North America via his botanic garden (due in no small part to his own innovative methods of packaging). He was a Fellow of the Linnean Society (of which he became a vice-president during his retirement), of The Royal Society of Edinburgh, of the Danish Royal Society (Copenhagen), of The Royal Society, of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland and of the Geological Society of London. His published works include *Tentamen Flora Nepalensis Illustratae*, and *Plantae Asiaticae Rariories*.

Honey-dew created by aphids that infest the leaves is eaten locally like manna.

The durable pink wood has been used in India for the interior finishing of buildings. It has also been used for boatbuilding, shingling and local construction, as well as for making solid cartwheels, masts and oars, furniture, tea chests, pencils, splints, and matches and matchboxes. This wood has been burnt as fuel too – despite the fact that the burning resin makes eyes smart and blackens faces with soot.

Turpentine and tar have been extracted from the wood and have proved of commercial value used as they are or to make varnishes.