

***Pinus virginiana* (Virginia Pine)**
Pine Family (Pinaceae)

Introduction:

Virginia pine is not particularly attractive, but it can be a popular Christmas tree species in the South. Its main attribute is its ability to grow in poor sites such as heavy clay soils where few other plants will grow.

Culture:

Virginia pine grows best in full sun and performs well in clay or sandy loam. It will grow in poor sites and adapts to most soil conditions except alkaline. It is hardy from zone 4 to 8. It can be susceptible to pitch canker, heart rot, and pine sawflies. Recently, southern pine beetles have become a serious pest and killed many native pines, especially in eastern Kentucky.

Additional information:

The cones of Virginia pine have a prickly appendage that makes them sharp.

Low branches on Virginia pine tend to persist, making it a popular Christmas tree in the South. Pruning or shearing is used to improve the shape of the tree for use as a Christmas tree.

Virginia pine is known for taking over abandoned land and holding it for approximately 75 years before other species take over.

Virginia pine has weak wood and is susceptible to breakage.

National champion Virginia pines are in Madisonville, Ky. (103 feet tall and 50 feet wide) and Jefferson County, Ala. (114 feet tall and 43 feet wide).

This tree was introduced into the landscape before 1739.



Botanical Characteristics:

Native habitat: New York to Alabama.

Growth habit: Broad, open pyramid when young with an irregular silhouette; becomes scrubby with long limbs with age.

Tree size: 15 to 40 feet tall with a spread of 10 to 30 feet. Growth rate is slow.

Flower and fruit: Monoecious; male flowers are orange-brown, female flowers are pale green. Cones are borne in groups of 2 to 4 or singly, and are 1½ to 3 inches long. Cones, which are dark brown, reach maturity during their second autumn but can persist after that. Cones have an appendage that makes them sharp.

Leaf: Needles, in bundles of two, are 1½ to 3 inches long and yellow-green to dark green. Needles remain on the tree for 3 to 4 years and are twisted.

Hardiness: Winter hardy to USDA zone 4.