

Pinus densiflora: Japanese Red Pine¹

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Introduction

Japanese Red Pine reaches a height and spread of 30 to 50 feet in the landscape growing much taller in the woods. Needles are arranged in pairs and remain on the tree for about three years. A distinguishing feature of this tree is the often crooked or sweeping trunk which shows reddish-orange peeling bark. Because lower branches are held nearly horizontal on the trunk forming a picturesque silhouette in the landscape it is used best as a specimen, not as a mass planting. Needles may turn yellowish during winter on some soils.

General Information

Scientific name: *Pinus densiflora*

Pronunciation: PIE-nus den-sih-FLOR-uh

Common name(s): Japanese Red Pine

Family: *Pinaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 3B through 7A (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: specimen; Bonsai

Availability: not native to North America

Description

Height: 30 to 50 feet

Spread: 30 to 50 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: oval

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate



Figure 1. Young *Pinus densiflora*: Japanese Red Pine

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: needle-like (filiform)

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: fragrant, evergreen, needled evergreen

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Figure 2. Range

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches, 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow

Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval, cone

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: tan

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; very showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: susceptible to breakage

Current year twig color: green

Current year twig thickness: medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: low

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

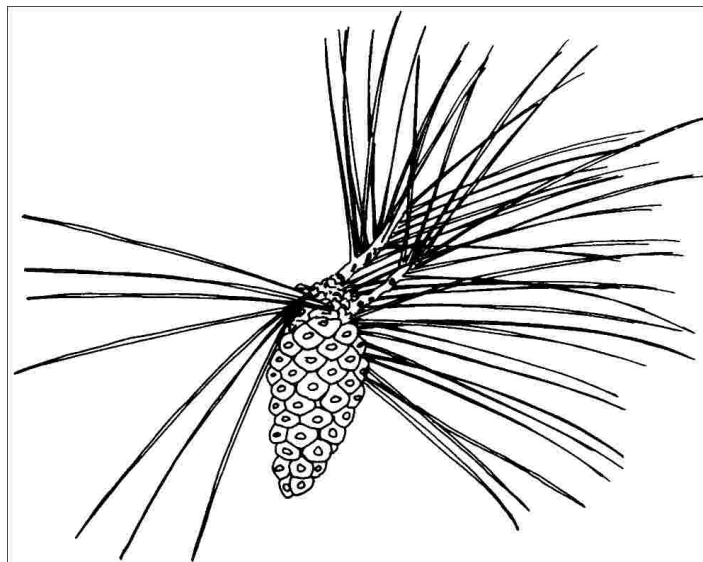


Figure 3. Fruit

Use and Management

The tree prefers a site with full sun and a well-drained, slightly acid soil. Clay soil is usually not suitable unless it is very well drained.

There are a few cultivars: 'Alboterminata' - yellowish needle tips; 'Aurea' - yellow needles; 'Oculis-draconis' - Dragon's Eye Pine - two yellow lines on needles; 'Umbraculifera' - Tanyosho Pine - 20 feet tall, multi-trunked.

Propagation is by seed.

Pests

This tree is usually pest-free, with occasional scale, but the list of potential problems is long.

Diseases

Some of its diseases are needle blight and rusts. Canker diseases may cause dieback of landscape Pines. Keep trees healthy and prune out the infected branches.

Needle cast is common on small trees and plantation or forest trees. Infected needles yellow and fall off.