

# *Pinus flexilis* 'Columnaris': Columnar Limber Pine<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

This cultivar of the North American native tree, typically 30 to 50 feet high and 10 feet wide, has a fairly narrow silhouette. The 2.5- to 3.5-inch-long, dark blue-green needles are joined by light brown, 1.5-inch-wide, hanging cones which add to the tree's overall attractiveness. Limber pine is so-named due to the flexible nature of the branches. Young branches can literally be tied into a knot. The tree has the overall look of a white pine when it is young.



Figure 1. Mature *Pinus flexilis* 'Columnaris': Columnar limber pine.  
Credits: UF/IFAS

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Pinus flexilis*

**Pronunciation:** PIE-nus FLECK-sih-liss

**Common name(s):** Columnar limber pine

**Family:** *Pinaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 4A through 7A (Figure 2)

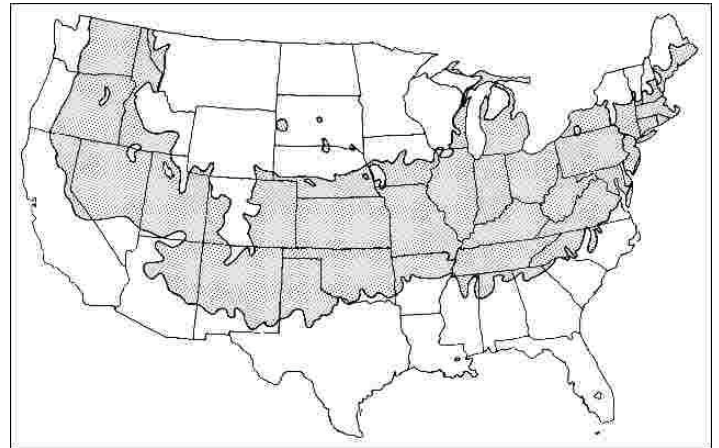


Figure 2. Range.  
Credits: UF/IFAS

**Origin:** native to North America

**Invasive potential:** not assessed/incomplete assessment

**Uses:** container or planter; specimen; bonsai

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## Description

**Height:** 30 to 50 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 12 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical

**Crown shape:** columnar

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** fine

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** spiral

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** needle-like (filiform)

**Leaf venation:** parallel

**Leaf type and persistence:** needled evergreen, evergreen, fragrant

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green, blue or blue-green

**Fall color:** no color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** yellow

**Flower characteristics:** not showy

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** elongated, cone

**Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

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

## Trunk and Branches

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

**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** medium

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun, partial sun, or partial shade

**Soil tolerances:** sand; loam; clay; acidic; alkaline; well-drained; occasionally wet

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** unknown

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem

**Winter interest:** no

**Outstanding tree:** yes

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** resistant

**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

## Use and Management

Limber pine grows best in full sun or partial shade on moist, well-drained soil but will easily adapt to harsher sites. Some horticulturists say they grow better under poor cultural conditions of drought and compacted clay soil. It adapts to wet soil by growing a shallow root system. One of the most tolerant of cold, windy weather in the winter and is not cold damaged when most other pines show needle browning.

A few of the other cultivars include: 'Glauca', foliage is a deeper blue/green than the species; 'Glauca Pendula', irregular, wide-spreading shrub with blue/green needles; 'Glenmore Dwarf', small, upright, pyramidal tree with blue/grey foliage; 'Nana', dwarf bushy type; and 'Pendula', wide, weeping silhouette.

Propagation is by seed.

## **Pests and Diseases**

There are a large number of pests and diseases of pine trees.