**Pinus sylvestris**  
**Scotch Pine**¹

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**INTRODUCTION**

In recent years the tree has been bothered with fatal attacks of Pine wilt nematode, therefore, its use in landscapes is not recommended in many areas (Fig. 1). A widely planted evergreen in the past that will grow 40 to 50 feet tall and 30 feet wide, Scotch Pine has bluish-green to green foliage which usually turns yellowish green in winter. Orange bark on the trunk and major limbs peels in papery flakes, and is visible through the canopy. The plant will tolerate dry soil and exposed sites forming an open, picturesque, asymmetrical canopy.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

- **Scientific name:** *Pinus sylvestris*
- **Pronunciation:** PIE-nus sill-VESS-triss
- **Common name(s):** Scotch Pine
- **Family:** Pinaceae
- **USDA hardiness zones:** 3 through 8A (Fig. 2)
- **Origin:** not native to North America
- **Uses:** Bonsai; reclamation plant; Christmas tree; no proven urban tolerance
- **Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

**DESCRIPTION**

- **Height:** 40 to 50 feet
- **Spread:** 25 to 30 feet
- **Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette
- **Crown shape:** oval
- **Crown density:** open
- **Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** fine

**Foliage**

- **Leaf arrangement:** alternate; spiral (Fig. 3)
- **Leaf type:** simple
- **Leaf margin:** entire
- **Leaf shape:** needle-like (filiform)
Leaf venation: parallel  
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen; fragrant; needle leaf evergreen  
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches; less than 2 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: no fall color change  
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow  
Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval  
Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches  
Fruit covering: dry or hard  
Fruit color: brown  
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; persistent on the tree

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns  
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure  
Breakage: susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break  
Current year twig color: green  
Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun  
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained  
Drought tolerance: high  
Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate  
Soil salt tolerance: moderate
Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem
Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: No entries found.
Ozone sensitivity: sensitive or moderately tolerant
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible
Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

USE AND MANAGEMENT

It is a good tree for reclamation sites, is tough and durable, and is very popular as a Christmas tree. It is often sprayed with green dye to give it a desirable green color for the holiday season. It is somewhat tolerant of basic soil pH, below 7.5.

Propagation is from seed which germinate readily.

Pests

Pine wilt nematode may be the most significant pest at this time.

Bark beetles bore into trunks making small holes scattered up and down the trunk. The holes look like shotholes. Stressed trees are more susceptible to attack. Keep trees healthy.

Sawfly larvae caterpillars are variously colored but generally feed in groups on the needles. Some sawfly larvae will flex or rear back in unison when disturbed. Sawflies can cause rapid defoliation of branches if left unchecked.

Pine needle scale is a white, elongated scale found on the needles. Pine tortoise scale is brown and found on twigs. Depending on the scale, horticultural oil may control overwintering stages.

Zimmerman Pine moth larvae bore into the trunk. The only outward symptoms may be death of parts of the tree or masses of hardened pitch on the branches.

The larvae of Pine weevils feed on the sapwood of the leaders. The leader is killed and the shoots replacing it are distorted. First symptoms are pearl white drops of resin on the leaders. The leaders die when the shoot is girdled as adults emerge in August. Prune out and burn infested terminals before July 15.

Pine shoot beetle is the latest recognized problem beginning to plague this tree.

Diseases

Canker diseases may rarely 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.

Scots Pine is very susceptible to pine wilt nematode.