**Sciadopitys verticillata**
Japanese Umbrella-Pine

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

**INTRODUCTION**

This small tree is used for its unusual texture and growth habit (Fig. 1). The tree will grow very slowly to about 25 to 40 feet tall (in 100 years) and spreads about 15 feet. On young plants the branches stick straight out from the single, straight trunk but become more pendulous with age. The tree grows in a tight pyramid which can be utilized in a rock garden or other small residential landscape site. The effect is much like the ribs on an umbrella. Due to the unusual nature of the plant, people either love this tree or won’t even look at it.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

- **Scientific name**: *Sciadopitys verticillata*
- **Pronunciation**: sigh-uh-DOP-ih-tiss ver-tiss-ill-LAY-tuh
- **Common name(s)**: Japanese Umbrella-Pine
- **Family**: Taxodiaceae
- **USDA hardiness zones**: 5 through 8A (Fig. 2)
- **Origin**: not native to North America
- **Uses**: container or above-ground planter; specimen; no proven urban tolerance
- **Availability**: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

**DESCRIPTION**

- **Height**: 25 to 30 feet
- **Spread**: 12 to 15 feet
- **Crown uniformity**: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

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Foliage

Leaf arrangement: whorled (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: linear
Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see; parallel
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen; needle leaf evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Fruit

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: green
Current year twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in the shade; tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: moderate
Figure 3. Foliage of Japanese Umbrella-Pine.

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem  
Winter interest: no special winter interest  
Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time  
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible  
Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

A bit of shade during the hot part of the day will produce the best plants in the southern part of its range. The orange, peeling bark is quite attractive but is usually hidden by the foliage. Provide a moist, acidic soil and protection from the wind. The tree is probably best used as a specimen, occasionally for private, protected gardens for a very special effect. A truly unique tree which grows very slowly, it is rare in cultivation. Only the most patient nursery operators grow this plant.

Propagated by seed or from cuttings.

‘Pendula’ is listed as a cultivar with pendulous branches.

Pests and Diseases

No serious pests or diseases exist for this tree.