

Plant Identification Guide



Eastern white pine *Pinus strobus*

Also Known As: White pine, Northern white pine, soft pine
Plant Family: Pine (*Pinaceae*)

Did you know? During the age of sail, eastern white pine was valued for masts. In colonial times, many trees were marked with a broad arrow reserving them for use by the British Royal Navy. Today, wood from the eastern white pine is used for cabinets, toys, boxes, and similar items. It is frequently used for windbreaks.

Identification Hints

White pines are distinct in having needles in clusters of 5. Pinyon pines can also have 5 needles but have shorter, stiffer needles and rigid cone scales. Eastern white pine is distinct in having slender needles, and long cones with thin, flexible scales. It is very similar to western white pine, but has smaller cones averaging 5 in (12 cm) as contrasted with western white pine which has cones almost twice as large, 10 in (24 cm). Both are common ornamentals.

Plant Description

This large native, cone-bearing evergreen grows up to 150 ft (45 m) tall. It is the largest conifer of the eastern and upper Midwest forests.

Leaves: The evergreen needles (leaves) are found in clusters of 5 and are soft, flexible, 3 to 5 in (7 to 13 cm) long, and bluish-green in appearance.

Pollen Cones: The pollen cones are 0.39 to 0.59 in (10 to 15 mm) long, cylindrical, yellow, and found in clusters near the branch tips.

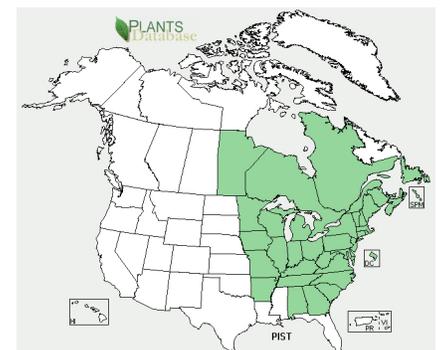
Seed Cones: The seed cones are about 4 to 8 in (10 to 20 cm) long and 1 in (2.5 cm) thick, long and tapering. The seed cones are light green, tinged in red, and are found at the end of branches. Cone production peaks every three to five years. Each cone scale usually bears two winged seeds, as do all native pines.

Bark: On young trees, the bark is thin, smooth, and greenish-brown in color. On older trees the bark becomes deeply fissured and dark grayish-brown.

Habitat: This tree prefers well-drained soil and cool, humid climates, but can also grow in boggy areas and rocky highlands. It ranges across southern Canada from Manitoba to Newfoundland, throughout the northern and eastern states from Minnesota and northern Iowa to the Atlantic coast,

and southward along the Appalachian Mountains to northern Georgia and Alabama.

Bloom time: The pollen-bearing flowers are clustered in small cones at the base of the new growth. The bright red seed-producing flowers occur on other twigs. The cones take two years to mature. Pollen cones open and shed pollen from April through June, depending on latitude. Seeds are dispersed August through September, about two years after cone initiation. Seeds germinate in the spring.



Compiled by: Paul Alaback and Sandra Henderson
Sources: USDA Plants Database; UCONN Plant Database; Preston, North American Trees
Photograph by: Sally and Andy Wasowski, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

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