

Red Pine

Pinus resinosa

Common name:

Red Pine

Pronunciation:

PI-nus rez-in-O-sa

Family:

Pinaceae

Genus:

Pinus

"From aboriginal times to the present, the Red Pine has been the companion of the graceful White Pine, that queen of the forest. Like a consort to a queen, seldom mentioned, the rugged Red Pine has shared much of its fate. Red it is called for its colorful bark of armor-like plates. The name of Hard Pine was used only by the old North Woods lumbermen, in contrast with the soft wood of the White Pine."

(excerpt from Donald Culross Peattie, *A Natural History of Trees of Eastern and Central North America*)

"Red Pines need direct sunlight to prosper. Hemlock and white pine seedlings may grow beneath red pines, but rarely the reverse. In a mixed stand, hardwoods such as northern red oak and sugar maple may grow taller than red pines, ultimately shading them out; other hardwood associates include red maple, beech and paper birch. Natural stands of red pine often have an understory that includes huckleberry, blueberry, shadbush, wintergreen Canada mayflower, bracken ferns, sarsaparilla, starflower, and trailing arbutus."

(excerpt from Charles Fergus, *Trees of New England, A Natural History* (Globe Pequot Press, 2005))

Quick ID Tips:

- Reddish-gray brown scaly bark furrowed into irregular, flat, ridges
- Large trees often have long, branchless stretches of trunk below the canopy
- 5" straight needles in bundles of 2 (rarely 3)
- Small 2" cones are not prickly

Details:

- This coniferous, evergreen tree grows to 50-80 ft. tall with stout spreading branches and a broad pyramidal head. Red Pine is self-pruning so mature trees may have long stretches of branchless trunk below the canopy.

- Bark is orange-red on younger trees and in the upper crown areas of mature trees. Bark is thicker and reddish-gray brown on the lower regions of a mature trees; sometimes the bark is referred to as "silvery." The bark is shallowly furrowed and scaly, and is divided into large, irregular, flat, plate-like ridges.
- Needles are in bundles of two (occasionally 3), 5-6" long -- the longest of any pine native to our area. Needles are slender, mostly straight, flexible, dark green, lustrous, and are densely tufted at the of stout twigs. When bent in half, the needles will snap easily and cleanly unlike Pitch Pine or White Pine needles.
- Cones are small (2") and conic-ovoid, symmetrical, scarcely stalked, nut-brown, and may stay on the tree for up to 3 years after seed drop.
- The thick bark of the Red Pine confers some degree of fire resistance, but not so much as the Pitch Pine nor are the Red Pine's cones heat-activated like those of the Pitch Pine. The Red Pine can survive scorching up to 40 ft. or so but will die if the fire reaches the crown.
- Red Pine provides nesting sites for much birdlife, including the cedar waxwing, red-breasted nuthatch, golden-crowned kinglet, Blackburnian warbler, and pine warbler. Red squirrels, white-footed mice, voles, and chipmunks feed on the seeds while deer, snowshoe hare, and porcupines browse on the seedlings and bark.
- Red Pine is shade intolerant and prefers sun and dry, loose, sandy, acidic soils. It is common in dry woodlands and eastern boreal forests. Many Red Pine seen today were planted and cultivated after massive logging in earlier days.
- Hardy in USDA Zones 2-5. Red Pine is native from Newfoundland to Manitoba, south to Minnesota, Michigan, the New England states, and the mountains of Pennsylvania.
- *resinosa*: Latin, resinous



plant habit



branch tip



male cones and needles



mature seed cones



bark

Sources:

- Oregon State University Landscape Plants, <https://landscapeplants.oregonstate.edu/plants/pinus-resinosa>
- Charles Fergus, *Trees of New England, A Natural History* (Globe Pequot Press 2005)
- David Sibley, *The Sibley Guide to Trees* (Knopf 2009)