



Pinus flexilis Limber Pine¹

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INTRODUCTION

This North American native tree, 30 to 50 feet high and 15 to 35 feet wide, has a fairly wide, pyramidal silhouette when young but slowly matures into a broad tree with a flattened canopy (Fig. 1). Almost looks square as it reaches 20-years-old. 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.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Pinus flexilis*

Pronunciation: PIE-nus FLECK-sih-liss

Common name(s): Limber Pine

Family: *Pinaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 7A (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: specimen; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 30 to 50 feet

Spread: 15 to 35 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: oval; pyramidal

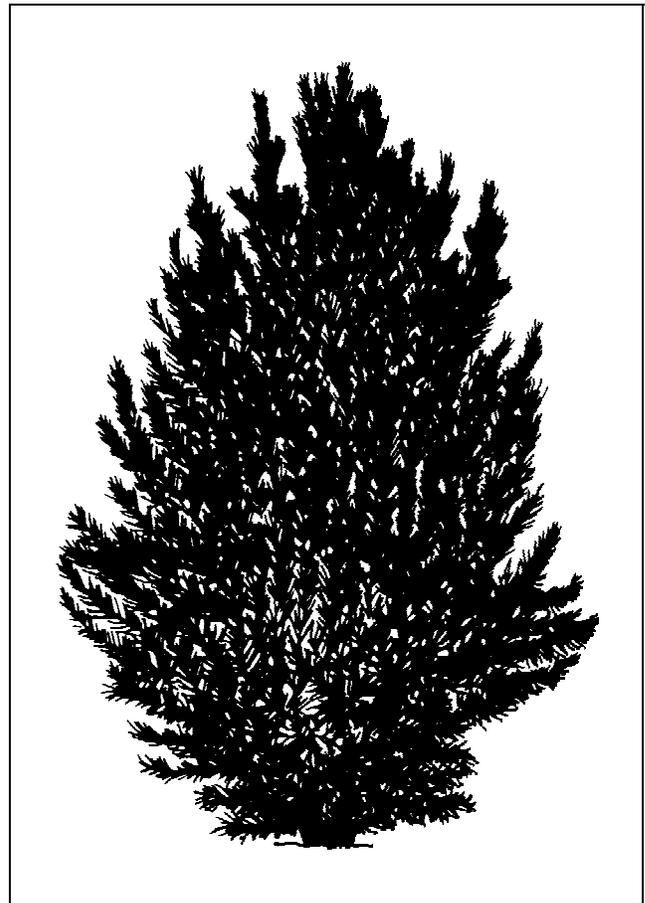


Figure 1. Young Limber Pine.

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate; spiral
- 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
- Leaf color:** blue or blue-green; 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:** elongated
- Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches
- Fruit covering:** dry or hard
- Fruit color:** brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: green

Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: high

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: long-term health usually not affected by pests

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 cultivars include: 'Columnaris', very upright form, 10 feet wide; '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 on Pine.