



Casuarina spp. Australian-Pine¹

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INTRODUCTION

Long-favored for use in erosion control along beaches, Australian-Pine Tree is now outlawed in many parts of Florida due to its invasive nature, rapid growth rate, and non-native status (Fig. 1). It is not a true pine tree and is not related to the pines. A straight, upright tree capable of reaching 70 to 90 feet in height and possessing rough, fissured, dark gray bark, Australian-Pine has what appear to be long, soft, gray/green needles but these "needles" are actually multi-jointed branchlets, the true leaves being rather inconspicuous. These "needles" sway gently in the breeze and give off a distinctive, soft whistle when winds are particularly strong. The insignificant flowers are followed by small, spiny cones, less than one-inch-long.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Casuarina* spp.

Pronunciation: kass-yoo-ar-EYE-nuh species

Common name(s): Australian-Pine, Casuarina

Family: *Casuarinaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: not recommended for planting

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

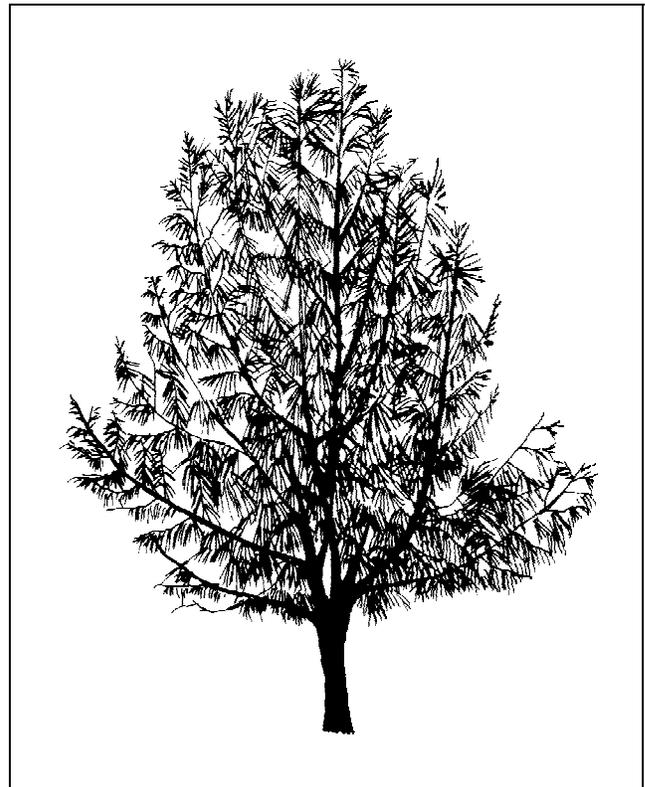


Figure 1. Middle-aged Australian-Pine.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 70 to 90 feet

Spread: 30 to 40 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: upright

Crown density: open

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: whorled (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: scale-like

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 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; round

Fruit length: < .5 inch

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: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop 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; thin

Culture

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

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

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: high

Soil salt tolerance: good

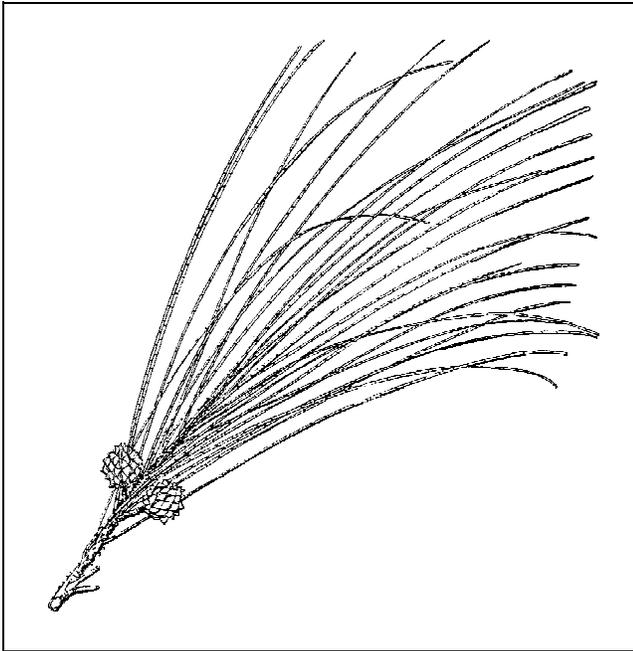


Figure 3. Foliage of Australian-Pine.

Pests

No pests are of major concern.

Diseases

Root rot.

Other

Roots: surface roots can lift sidewalks or interfere with mowing

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: No entries found.

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Highly salt- and drought-tolerant, Australian-Pine was widely used in seaside landscapes as a windbreak, screen, clipped hedge, and for topiary. Its ability to withstand heat and other adverse conditions made Australian-Pine a favorite for street tree or specimen use also. It is not planted now due to the problems it has created including the elimination of habitat for native plants. Injured trees compartmentalize wounds poorly and decay advances rapidly through the trunk. Old trees which have been topped and abused often become hazardous and they can fall over or drop large limbs.

Growing in full sun or partial shade, Australian-Pine will tolerate many adverse conditions, dry or wet soil, heat or high winds. Trees are hardy to about 25-degrees F. Vigorous sprouts often originate from the roots of older trees knocked back by the cold.