

Tree Profile: *Casuarina* and *Allocasuarina*

General: According to Wikipedia - *Casuarina* & *Allocasuarina* are genus's in the family Casuarinaceae with together of over 90 species, native to Australia, the Indian subcontinent, southeast Asia, and islands of the western Pacific Ocean. They were once treated as the sole genus in the family, but have been split into four genera (see: Casuarinaceae).

A great native for bonsai use, which could easily rival the Japanese Black Pine for its appearance - if styled accordingly and its hardiness. Although referred to by some as the "Australian Pine" or She Oak, it is not related to the pine or oak families.

Lighting & Temperature: Full sun (is best) to partial shade. Frost tolerant to -4.0°C to -8.0°C pending on location!

Watering: Casuarinas are thirsty, but tolerate dry soil between watering. Don't allow to dry out and remain dry! Young plants benefit from soaking during dry spells. Good drainage is critical to prevent root rot!

Feeding: Liquid fertilizer monthly during growth periods. Slow release native fertilizers like Osmocote can be used when re-potting.

Pruning and Wiring: Hard pruning and foliage reduction is possible provided it's done prior to the new season growth start! *Casuarina* will develop a mass of re-growth everywhere; new branches will form quickly for a complete re-style of the tree. "Clip and grow" achieves excellent results. Shorten the needles by twisting and pinching, which will not cause browning like cutting does. Wiring can be done anytime, taking care to protect the delicate bark and branches. Do not wire while the plant is setting buds, wire only woody shoots!

Repotting: Early spring is best just prior to bud swelling. Avoid removing the soil and roots immediately around the trunk - not too much root disturbance. Add some washed coarse river sand to your bonsai mix for good drainage.

Propagation: Cuttings in autumn or from seeds in spring and air-layering. Collecting from rivers banks, road sides and private property. Permission should always be obtained from land owners! Cut the leaves back and keep/mix some soil from the collection area with your potting mix.

Pests and diseases: Scales, mealybugs, spider mites - use specific pesticides. Root rot if poor drainage.

Styles: Every style and form of bonsai is possible including shohin and mame!

Just to name a few species suitable for Bonsai:

Casuarina cunninghamiana - River She Oak, with a dense rough bark and grayish green foliage.

Casuarina glauca - Swamp She Oak, has a light brown rough bark with slender drooping branches.

Casuarina equisetifolia - Beach or Coastal She Oak, also called "Australian Pine" with a rough dark grey bark and much branched grey-green twigs

Allocasuarina littoralis - Black She Oak, an upright fast growing species with fine branchlets and a tough deeply furrowed bark.

Allocasuarina torulosa - Forest or Rose She Oak, slender growth with maroon color in winter.

Allocasuarina decaisneana - Desert Oak, is an attractive, medium-sized, slow-growing tree in dry desert region. It has a cork-like bark that is deeply furrowed and instead of leaves the tree has long segmented branchlets.

