

Tree Profile: Scots Pine - *Pinus sylvestris*

General Information: Native to western and northern Europe and Siberian Asia, the Scots pine is a conical to columnar tree, which frequently loses its lower branches in the wild with maturity, taking a natural literati form. Can grow up to 35m tall and 1m trunk diameter when mature. Needles are twisted, blue-green or yellow-green 5-7cm long and borne in pairs. Bark becomes flaky, red-brown with age. Dwarf cultivars are available. Needle length can be reduced using bonsai management techniques.

Lighting: Give pines as much sunlight as possible during spring, summer and autumn. Insufficient sunlight will result in extended needle length and dieback of shaded branches.

Temperature: Will tolerate Melbourne summers and winters without stress.

Watering: All Pines dislike permanently wet soil though care should be taken to ensure their soil never dries out completely. It is important that a very fast-draining soil-medium is always used. Pines also benefit from regular misting.

Feeding: Feed during spring and autumn, heavier in autumn. Use slow release fertiliser such as Dynamic Lifter, blood and bone, direct on pot or preferably in teabags for bonsai pots. Supplement with weekly or bi-weekly liquid feeding if desired. *Photo courtesy of Bonsai Matsu*

Pruning and Wiring: Trunk chopping and heavy branch pruning should be undertaken in autumn or winter when the sap flow in the tree is slower and sap loss will be reduced. Prune back the branch or trunk leaving a short stump. Allow the stump to dry out over the following year before either jinning it or removing the stump. Wire during dormancy period in winter. Only wire older growth, not current year.

Elongated candles should be shortened by breaking to an appropriate and even length from late spring to early summer, and reduced to two at any one point. Reduce each candle by up to half, more on the stronger candles growing in the apical areas. Cut new shoots again in summer if healthy and excessively strong. Dormant buds around base of needles will be encouraged to grow.

In autumn, remove any additional surplus shoots. Select two shoots which are growing horizontally, form a v-shape, and are of the same strength. Remove excess needles which are growing vertically upwards or downwards to balance growth over the tree.

Propagation: Sow seed outside in early winter, the seed needs to be exposed to cold to germinate. Cultivars need to be propagated by grafting in late winter.

Repotting: Repot as the Pine comes into active growth. Use a very free-draining soil-mix. When repotting, pine soils will often be seen to contain a white, thread-like fungus called Mycorrhiza, which are very beneficial to the health of the tree. When repotting, retain a small quantity of the old compost to ensure that Mycorrhiza is retained in the new soil mix. For the same reason, do not wash the roots. Remove old, compacted soil by hand. It is not necessary to prune any of the foliage of the pine after root pruning to 'balance' the tree. The waxy needles of a Pine require relatively little moisture uptake from the roots and there is no need to try and reduce transpiration through the above-ground growth. The more foliage the tree has after root pruning, the more strength it will have to repair and regenerate the rootball. *Photo courtesy of Bonsai Matsu*

Pests and Diseases: Aphids, sawfly larvae, and various needle cast diseases. Occasionally, a very hardy caterpillar! Treat with Yates Mavrik or other pyrethrum-based contact insecticide.

Photo (right) courtesy of W Valavanis Blog



Re-Potting Tray

While watching a YouTube video by Peter Chan at Herons Bonsai, our member Fiona M was quite taken by the repotting tray he was using which he called a Gorilla Tray. She eventually tracked down a local source for the item - Burdens Plumbing Trade in Oban Road, Ringwood. It is not normally stocked but can be ordered in, price is \$35.

Might be worth considering for those members who want to reduce the spread of messy material at potting time!

