

# Pitch Pine - *Pinus rigida*

## Description

The pitch pine can grow to 50-60 feet in height and its trunk is 1-3 feet in diameter. It has a broad, rounded or irregular crown of horizontal branches. Its needles are greenish-yellow and are about 3 inches long.



They grow in bundles and are thick and stiff and often twisted together. The bark of the pitch pine is dark gray and thick, rough, and deeply furrowed. The cones are yellowish-brown and egg-shaped and about 1-3 inches long with pointed scales held together with resin. The pitch pine can live to be 200 years old.

## Habitat

The pitch pine grows in shallow sands and gravels on steep slopes and ridges and in river valleys and [swamps](#).

## Range

The pitch pine is found from Southern Maine to New York, south to Virginia and southern Ohio, and in the mountains to eastern Tennessee and Kentucky, northern Georgia, and western North and South Carolina. It grows from sea level in the coastal plain to about 2,000 feet in the north and from 1,400-4,500 feet in upper Piedmont and southern mountains.



## Uses

The pitch pine is now used for pulpwood, crating, and fuel, but it played a big role during the days of wooden ships and railroads. Its wood is rough grained and not very strong, but it contains a lot of resin. This makes the wood resistant to decay. The wood was often used for ship building, fences, and railroad ties. The colonists made turpentine and tar from the resin of the pitch pine. They would also fasten the pine knots to a pole and use them as torches.



## Fun Fact

The pitch pine is a very hardy species that is resistant to fire and injury. After a fire, sprouts grow from the roots and stumps of the burned trees.