



Norfolk Island Pine



Captain James Cook noted the presence of large forests of tall, straight trees that appeared to be suitable for use as masts and yards for sailing ships. However it was found that Norfolk Island pine trees were not resilient enough for those uses and the industry was abandoned.

Sources:

https://www.conifers.org/ar/Araucaria_heterophylla.php
www.wikapaedia.org

Family: *Araucariaceae*

Genus *Araucaria*

Botanic name: *Araucaria heterophyllai*

First described by Capt. James Cook (1772–75) on his second voyage to the South Pacific.

Origin: It is endemic to Norfolk Island, a small island (about 10 square kilometres) about 1500 km east of Australia where there are trees of 170 years old .

Habitat: The Norfolk Pine is now planted widely in Australia where it is commonly used in beach side planting as well as New Zealand, Hawaii and California.

The IUCN reports that this species is facing a high risk of extinction in the wild due to a limited and severely fragmented distribution.

Description: It is a slow growing tree, reaching a height of 50–65 m with straight vertical trunk and symmetrical branches, even in the face of incessant onshore winds that can contort most other species.

From the straight trunk, it emits its branches almost horizontally or slightly oblique, in number of five, forming floors; the plane of each floor is a perfect pentagon.

Juvenile leaves are awl-shaped, incurved, green, needle-like, to 1.2 cm. long. Adult leaves are scale-like, 4-5 mm. long, incurved, densely arranged, bright dark green; on fertile branchlets overlapping, broadly ovate, spine-tipped, 6 mm. long by 4-6 mm. wide. Bark is grey-brown, exfoliating in fine scales.

Propagation and cultivation: Male cones grow in clusters, elongated, 4 cm. long, yellowish-brown or reddish. Female cones are broader, 12-15 cm. long, with triangular scales and a long incurved bract. Seeds 2.5-3cm. long by 1.2cm. wide, with broad wings.

Norfolk Pines are salt tolerant and grow well in sandy soils. They are propagated by seed.

Prolific seed fall occurs every 4-5 [years] and the seeds are a popular food source for the Green Parrot and introduced rats on Norfolk Island.

Local history: In the late 1950s, a trial shipment of Norfolk pine logs was sent to plywood manufacturers in Sydney, Australia, with the hope of developing a timber export industry on Norfolk Island.

Although the plywood companies reported excellent results, the industry was deemed not sustainable by the Norfolk Island Advisory Council, which decided to reserve timber production for local use.

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