**Pinus mugo** - Mugo Pine or Swiss Mountain Pine (*Pinaceae*)

*Pinus mugo* is known as a spreading, slow-growing evergreen shrub with ascending branches and relatively short needles. Mugo Pine is used at foundations and entranceways, on embankments, within rock gardens, as a facer shrub, as formal or informal hedges, and in raised planters. It often gets larger than intended, but is tolerant of pruning or shearing.

**FEATURES**

**Form**
- small- to medium-sized evergreen shrub (in most cases)
- ultimate size is highly dependent upon the cultivar, but the smallest cultivars ultimately mature at about 1.5' tall x 3' wide, and the largest selections in the nursery trade can eventually become very large shrubs (10' tall x 15' wide)
- upright mound or upright flat-top growth habit, spreading at an early age
- slow growth rate

**Culture**
- full sun to partial shade
- very adaptable to poor soils, clay soils, sandy soils, dry soils, soils of alkaline pH, and is tolerant of moderate shearing
- propagated by seeds, grafts, or rooted cuttings
- 2 serious pests (pine sawfly larvae and pine needle scale) that can be controlled with appropriate monitoring when they occur
- abundantly available, primarily as relatively compact cultivars in container form, but also in B&B form for the larger selections
- newly emergent growth (candles) can be sheared back halfway for even more dense and formal growth the following year
- can be left unpruned if it has ample space to grow in a sunny location, since it is naturally a dense and low-branching shrub, but it is often sited at foundations, and therefore by habit and necessity regularly sheared into a rounded or flat-topped shape

**Foliage**
- 2 needles per bundle, from 1-2" long, persisting for up to 5 yrs., maturing to a dark green color

**Flowers**
- ornamental
- inconspicuous
- monoecious

**Fruits**
- small cones are relatively rare

**Twigs**
- attractive light green candles (vertical stems with miniature needles) emerge in spring
- twigs mature to be rough (needle-scarred) and black-brown branches with age, often concealed by the dense and long-persistent needles

**Trunk**
- dark gray, broken into plates on larger specimens, often unseen as the plant is normally a shrub that branches and foliages to the ground

**USAGE**

**Function**
- foundation, entranceway, group planting, embankment, facer, specimen, raised planter, or hedge evergreen shrub
- Mugo Pine should be used more often as an embankment cover, as its shallow root system and spreading growth habit will combine, over time, to create a solid evergreen cover in sunny, exposed areas
- Mugo Pine can also be used as an effective non-thorny barrier hedge, and either formally sheared to the desired height and width, or informally left alone

**Texture**
- medium texture
- thick density

**Assets**
- low branching and dense evergreen foliage occur to the ground
- attractive candles (new stems) are held prominently above the flat-topped, mounding, or rounded shrub
- slow growth rate (an asset since it is often sited at or near foundations)

**Liabilities**
- most "dwarf" cultivars get much larger than advertised with age
- 2 serious pest problems: pine sawfly larvae (alarming cosmetic chewing damage) and pine needle scale (subtle long-term damage that leads to plant decline if untreated)

**Habitat**
- Zones 2 to 7
- Native to the Alps in Europe (where it takes on a mixture of shapes and sizes that range from large shrubs to large trees [up to 80' tall])

**SELECTIONS**

**Alternates**
- evergreen globed shrubs of various foliage color (*Picea omorika* 'Nana' [blue-silver-green], *Pinus strobus* 'Blue Shag' [blue], *Thuja occidentalis* 'Hetz Midget' [green])
- evergreen spreading shrubs (cultivars of *Juniperus chinensis*, *Rhododendron*, *Taxus x media*, etc.)
- naturally table-topped, vased, or flat-topped evergreen shrubs (*Pinus densiflora* 'Umbraculifera')

**Cultivars - Variants - Related species**
- *P. mugo* 'Enci' - slowly maturing to 3' x 5', very densely twiggy with short needles, with a table-top growth habit
- *P. mugo* 'Gnom' - a true dwarf form, with shorter, more dense needles and a flat top, slowly maturing to 1.5' x 3', sometimes grafted onto a standard