# *Pinus nigra* - Austrian Pine (*Pinaceae*)

---

*Pinus nigra* is a bold-textured, long-needled, and dark green Pine tree that is ideal for midwestern soils and climates. Austrian Pine is plagued by a combination of being overplanted and being very susceptible to the fungal infection known as diplodia tip blight.

## FEATURES

**Form**

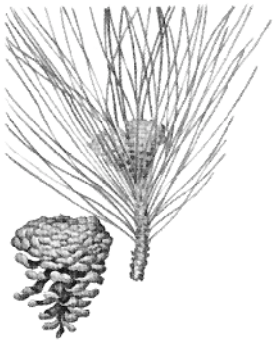
-large evergreen specimen tree
-maturing at about 40' tall x 20' wide in urban situations, but can reach much larger dimensions under optimum conditions with extreme maturity
-upright oval to upright pyramidal growth habit in youth, becoming rounded and flat-topped with maturity
-medium growth rate

**Culture**

-full sun to partial sun
-performs best in full sun in moist, well-drained soils, but very adaptable to adverse soil conditions (including clay, compacted, poor, and/or alkaline soils), moderate to heavy winter salt spray, heat, drought, and pollution
-propagated primarily by seeds
-diplodia tip blight (*Diplodia pinea*, also known as *Sphaeropsis sapinea*) is a serious disease (specifically fungal) problem, and pine sawfly larvae is an occasional pest problem (but not nearly as severe as in Mugo Pine)
-abundantly available in B&B form

**Foliage**

-2 evergreen needles per bundle, to 5" long and stiff
-dark green, radiating from the very stout stems, and persisting for about 5 yrs. on the stems



**Flowers**

-like all pines, monoecious, flowering in late Apr. and early May, and while noticeable they are ornamentally insignificant

**Fruits**

-2" brown cones

**Twigs**

-yellowish green and stout when emerging from the large terminal buds as upright "candles", becoming gray, rough, needle-scarred, and very stout with age

**Trunk**

-gray-brown furrows and ridges are often hidden by the lower branches, unless the tree is limbed up with age
-upon prolonged exposure to sunlight, the outer bark on mature trees becomes chalky white, and the inner bark darkens to almost black, creating a platy zebra-like pattern with maturity; however, only Austrian Pines that are limbed up and of old age exhibit this trait

## USAGE

**Function**

-evergreen tree used either as a single specimen, or in group or mass plantings as a visual screen or windbreak, and casting dense shade with maturity

**Texture**

-bold texture in youth (becoming very bold-textured with age as the branches develop a semi-contorted character, the trunk becomes bare, and the bark develops plates and a bicolored pattern)
-thick density in youth but variable with age

**Assets**

-probably the most urban tolerant pine for the Midwestern U.S.
-winter salt spray tolerant (one of the few Pines) very bold texture
-attractive white-green "candles" in spring
-ornamental white-and-black bark with age

**Liabilities**

-diplodia tip blight is a potentially severe disease problem that may limit the plant's use in future

**Habitat**

-Zones 4 to 7
-Native to various regions of Europe, including Austria

## SELECTIONS

**Alternates**

-bold-textured evergreen trees (*Picea pungens*, *Pinus heldreichii* var. *leucodermis*, *Pinus ponderosa*, *Pinus taeda*, etc.)
-screen or windbreak evergreen trees (*Abies concolor*, *Abies fraseri*, *Picea abies*, *Picea pungens*, *Pinus strobus*, etc.)

**Variants**

-the species form is practically the only available choice; however, Bosnian Pine (*Pinus heldreichii* var. *leucodermis*), which is slower-growing but strikingly similar in its bold, dark-green foliaged, broadly pyramidal appearance and salt spray tolerance as compared to Austrian Pine, may become its substitute in the future, IF Bosnian Pine does not develop diplodia tip blight in landscape plantings

NOTE: Terminal foliage and stems are very susceptible to diplodia tip blight, which slowly but surely kills entire branches (and entire trees in a group planting if left unchecked for several years); however, the death of these terminal stems (usually exposed to the sun) is sometimes confused with interior branch dieback, a natural occurrence in all trees due to self-shading.
The inexpensive and thoroughly preventive early care for diplodia tip blight is to annually inspect each tree in a given area, and snip off the infected stems anytime between late summer and late winter at 1' below the point of dieback, as repeated infection by fungal spores is transmitted each spring (primarily to the newly emerging candles, primarily by splashing rainwater); more expensive treatments are chemical or fungicidal in nature as the new candles expand in growth, and have a narrow window of application in order to yield an effective result for the entire year.