

Sand Pine - *Pinus clausa*

General information: This native North American pine is usually seen as a scrubby tree, capable of reaching 100 feet in height but more often seen 15 to 40 feet tall, with a slow growth rate (Fig. 1). The supple, two needles in a sheath, brilliant green evergreen leaves no more than three inches long, and the plant's ability to thrive in almost any soil make Sand Pine a good choice for use as a Christmas tree, with proper shearing. The narrow 2 to 3.5-inch-long, spiny cones persist for quite a while on the tree, often becoming embedded in the wood of the twigs. The bark is a reddish brown, and the trunk is straight and long. The branches are twiggy. New growth will sprout on hard wood.

Sand pine lends itself to informal upright. It also may be beautiful in the abstract style, bunjin or literati.

Family: *Pinaceae*

Lighting: Enjoys full sun in the winter, (November - April) All bonsai must have filtered sun in the summer in Florida.

Temperature: Zones 7 through 10. Some freezing is tolerated but not extreme heat.

Watering: Unlike Japanese black pine, it enjoys plenty of water, summer and winter, after it has been taught to like water.

Feeding: Fertilize every three months using a weak solution of fish emulsion.

Repotting: The winter months, December, January and February are the safest times in Florida. Do not prune the branches extensively if the sap is flowing. This weakens the tree. It may also, kill it. Pine trees often produce a white mould in the soil. This is not a disease, but the sign of a healthy tree and should not be touched. Care, however, must be taken, it also could be white grubs. Grubs can be detected, because they move. It may be very happy for four or five years, before it needs new soil.

Grows well in a fertile sandy mixture. Use as much sterilized soil as possible. It is salt tolerant, and can be found in areas 20 - 30 feet above sea level. When collecting try to get as much of the soil as possible. If the soil falls off the roots, replace it immediately. Plastic bags may be used, so water may be added. Newly-potted bonsai should be protected from the wind and the sun in Florida for 3-4 weeks. When new growth starts, then the bonsai may be moved to morning sun. After two more weeks sand pines may be moved to full sun. When repotting use half sharp sand and half soil.

Pests and diseases: Red Spider will turn the needles to a grey-green color. Most of the time these trees are very healthy. If they become dry the needles will turn brown, or if it is root bound.

Bibliography:

Florida Bonsai VII:1:22-23,29-35, XVII:1:51-52
USDA Fact Sheet ST-458

Compiled by Thomas L Zane