

Austrian Pine

Pinus nigra

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Summary:

Foliage: About 5 inch long stiff needles; 2 needles per fascicle; evergreen

Height: About 50 feet

Spread: About 30 feet

Shape: densely conical in youth; with age more irregular and flat-topped

Main features: Austrian pine is a medium to large pine tree that is quite dense in its youth (about first 20 years). As most other pines, with age this species loses its lower branches and assumes a flat-topped irregular form. Austrian pine is quite tolerant of poor dry soils and urban conditions (including salt spray). It is, however, susceptible to an ultimately lethal fungal disease (*Sphaeropsis* tip blight; formerly *Diplodia* tip blight). The disease, which kills the needles (at the tips of branches), starts at the bottom of the tree and makes its way up to the tree; *Sphaeropsis* tip blight will take several years to kill a tree. Prevention of drought stress is apparently the best way to avoid this disease; removal of infected plant parts and fungicide applications can control the disease spread if the tree is only minimally infected. If the disease has spread throughout the tree, then the tree should be taken down and all parts removed from the site. This species is also susceptible to nematodes (microscopic roundworms) which can kill a tree in a single year.

Plant Needs:

Zone: 3 to 7 (will languish in hot portions of zone 7)

Light: Full sun

Moisture: Average to dry

Soil type: Most soils except for poorly-drained soils

pH range: Acid to alkaline

Functions:

Austrian pine can be used as in mass, in borders, and as a windbreak (for the early part of its life; canopy opens with age)

Care:

No special care is needed except to scout for the presence of dead or dying branch tips which might be an indication of *Sphaeropsis* tip blight. If this is detected, consult a professional arborist or plant laboratory for disease verification.

Additional Information:

There are a few cultivars in the trade but they are not commonly sold in garden centers.