

ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION GROUP— EASTERN WHITE PINE, A MAJESTIC NATIVE CONIFER



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The eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*) is the tallest native tree in the north-eastern United States. The nearest white pine giant to us is in the Ottawa National Forest in Michigan. It measures 155 feet. For perspective, a 15 story building measures about 150 feet. Indiana's tallest white pine measures 98 feet, according to the most recent IDNR Big Tree Registry from 2015. (North America's tallest tree is the coastal redwood of California that can exceed 370 feet in height.)

Giant white pines once grew abundantly in the Indiana Dunes, but in the 19th century, their valuable timber was used for the building of Chicago and other cities as the population moved westward. Now only scattered white pines grow in our forests. In Indiana, most naturally occurring white pines grow in northwestern Indiana.

This handsome tree has 3 to 6 inch long, light green needles in bundles of five. Touch the needles if you have a chance. They are

one of the few pines with needles soft to the touch. A planted and happy white pine can be expected to one day reach a height of 80 feet.

White pines do very well as ornamental trees in Beverly Shores. They prefer moist, acidic well-drained soil and full sun, though they tolerate partial sun and dryer soils. If, however, you have regular visits by deer in your property in the winter time, the deer may browse on the needles. To protect the white pine, try wrapping it in chicken wire during the winter. When someday it achieves sufficient height to be out of reach of deer, you may be able to stop wrapping it.



The Morton Arboretum describes some interesting cultivars of white pine on their web site. If you don't want a tree that someday might exceed 80 feet, "Nana," a dwarf white pine grows 3 to 5 feet tall and wide. If you have a small space for planting but still want some height, there is a variety, "Fastigiata." "Fastigate" means that the branches all bend upward, almost parallel to the trunk, like a Lombardy poplar, giving the tree a very columnar shape. Finally, for something more exotic, you could plant "Pendula," a weeping variety of white pine that grows 15 to 20 feet high.

If you have questions about white pine or other native or non-native plants, don't hesitate to contact Terry Bonace (tbonace@gmail.com) or Candice Smith (candicepetersonsmith@gmail.com) for assistance. Also please visit our website at www.bserg.org for further information on invasive plants and native replacements.