



Meet the Pinyon Pine Tree

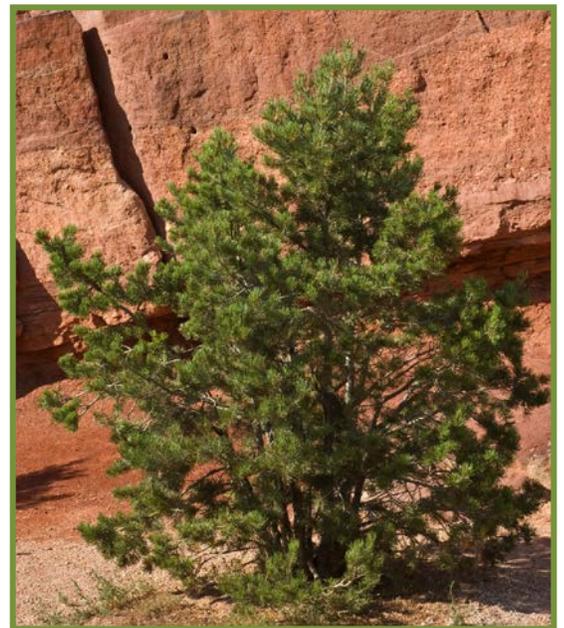
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Name:

The Pinyon Pine tree is a slow growing, compact, long-lived, drought tolerant tree. *Pinus edulis* is native to the desert mountains of California, east to New Mexico and Texas, and north to Wyoming. Because of its relatively small size for a pine tree, it is well suited to gardens and containers. NOTE: "Pinyon" is sometimes spelled "Pinon."

Interesting Facts:

- The second part of Pinyon Pine's botanical name, *edulis*, means "edible" in Latin. It refers to the tasty seeds produced in its 2-inch, roundish, light brown cones that grow in clusters on very mature trees. Commonly known as pine nuts, these seeds of the female cones are sold in markets, and can be used in making cakes, cookies, and candies.
- Native Americans steeped the Pinyon Pine needles for tea. The inner bark was used to ward off starvation. The seeds/nuts were eaten raw, roasted, or ground into flour.
- Birds, black bears, chipmunks, mule deer, quail, and squirrels rely on the Pinyon seeds/nuts for food.



Description:

Our Master Gardener tree list—entitled "Ornamental Trees for Home Gardens and Landscapes," describes the Pinyon Pine as a slow-growing, dense tree with rounded and spreading shape. The Pinyon Pine matures to 10-20 feet tall and wide in ten years, developing a flat, rounded crown. It is an evergreen tree, meaning its leaves (needles) remain green all year long. The stiff, dark green needles are 3/4 - 1 1/2 inches long.

Pinyon Pines usually have needles grouped in two's. However, a single needle Pinyon Pine (*Pinus monophylla*), and a five needle Pinyon Pine grow in San Diego County and Baja California Norte. These two species have introgressively hybridized within this range, which has resulted in an array of hybrids, including one with four needles. Formal classification of these hybrids and the five needle Pinyon Pine is not yet finalized. Currently, they are called: Parry Pinyon, Four-leaved Nut Pine, or Sierra Juarez Pine.

Care:

Plant fall through spring in full sun. Carefully choose a location where you won't mind the old needles gradually dropping all year long. Also, consider that the Pinyon Pine attracts birds. Be sure to provide them with plenty of space to grow naturally. All pines require well-drained soil. They usually do not need any fertilizer. Heavy feeding results in weak, rank growth. Water deeply though infrequently to establish their roots, and then reduce to an occasional drink.

The Water Use Classification of Landscape Species (WUCOLS IV) rates Pinyon Pine as a "low water use" native tree. The WUCOLS project was initiated and funded by the Water Use Efficiency Office of the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). Work was directed by the University of California Cooperative Extension. WUCOLS IV provides evaluations of the irrigation needs of over 3,500 plant groups used in California landscapes at www.ucanr.edu/sites/WUCOLS.

Pines can benefit from occasional pruning. Spring is the best time to prune, when new growth appears. Cutting back the spires of new growth (called candles) will promote bushiness. When you only partway cut the candles, some overall size increase is allowed. Removing the candles entirely, limits the size of the tree without distorting its natural shape. If an unwanted limb is removed, a new branch will not sprout to take its place.

Air pollution can cause abnormal pine needle drop and poor growth. Pinyon Pines also are subject to a native pine engraver beetle--the Pinyon Ips. These beetles are not very aggressive tree killers. Environmental stresses, such as drought, wind, lightning, or competition from other trees, greatly increases a pine tree's vulnerability to beetles. Tree stress can also result from human activity—construction, excavating, paving.

Design Tips:

This pleasing pine is a good choice for rock gardens, for beds and borders with low growing perennials, for planting in containers, and to *bonsai*--the Japanese art of controlling a tree's size planted in a small pot or tray.

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