

Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*)

Nebraska Forest Service

An often-overlooked evergreen in Nebraska is the eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*). Eastern white pine is native to the north eastern and north central part of the United States and it grows to be a very large evergreen tree sometimes reaching heights of more than 100 feet. The tallest white pine in the United States is 167 feet tall and is located in Michigan. White pine is the state tree of both Maine and Michigan. In the early days of settlement in the United States, white pine was used as masts for sailing vessels. Its long straight stem was much in demand. The wood was easily worked and quite beautiful.



As white pine became more popular as a landscape tree in Nebraska it became more plentiful in local nurseries. It is now common in both public and private landscapes. It makes a very nice landscape tree and can be used for wind and snow protection as well. Some farmers have planted entire rows of white pine to protect farm buildings and provide shade and beauty.

White pine is a fast growing pine sometimes putting on more than a foot and a half of terminal growth in the spring of the year. The tree is subject to shaping by the Nebraska winds and you can see some very good examples of that along Interstate 80 going from Omaha to Lincoln. The strong southerly winds that occur during the growing season push the tree to lean heavily toward the north.



White pine is a “five needle” pine meaning that the needles are arranged in bundles of five as opposed to Scotch pine with bundles of two. The foliage is soft to the touch and sometimes the tree will show a bluish color, especially in the early days of summer when growth is very active. The needles are 2 to 4 inches long. The cones are 4 to 5 inches long and banana shaped. They develop through the summer months and are often used for Christmas decoration when they drop in the fall and early winter.

White pine enjoys a well-drained site for planting and if possible an east or north facing slope. East and north faces have cooler soils and retain more moisture. If you don’t have an ideal site the tree will grow well on just about any

eastern Nebraska site as long as drainage is good. White pine does not like to have “wet feet” so if water stands in the site, then white pine may be a poor choice.