



# Trees of Williamstown Botanic Gardens

**Botanical Name:** *Pinus halepensis*

**Common Name:** Aleppo Pine

**Origin:** Mediterranean (Greece & Israel to Spain and Morocco)



Pinaceae is a widespread family of mostly evergreen resinous trees. The family is noted for its vast northern hemisphere forests of Larch (*Larix*), Fir (*Abies*) Spruce (*Picea*) and Pine (*Pinus*). The leaves are linear or needle-like in dense clusters or short spurs. Pines have leaves (needles) in bundles of 2, 3 or 5, and occasionally 1 (*Pinus monophylla*). The female cones are distinctive comprising of many scales and may be woody or flexible, solitary or in groups, and may persist for many years in the upper canopy. Pines are mostly tall trees and occur in large forests in the northern hemisphere.

Aleppo Pine is a broadly domed tree, often with the upper main branches leaning to one side giving the crown a flattened appearance. The cones are in clusters, 5-11cm long, pointing downwards and bent backwards along the stem, and are retained in the upper canopy for several years. The bark is distinctly grey bark, even silver, and narrowly fissured. The leaves are in 2's, slender and 6-10cm long, rarely 12cm, and often curved and twisted.

Grows naturally throughout the Mediterranean countries, mostly on dry rocky limestone sites. Aleppo Pine is ideally suited to alkaline soils which occur at Williamstown, Geelong, in north west Victoria, and in South Australia. Widely grown in public parks and gardens, cemeteries and as a shade tree and in windbreaks.

The resin is used to flavour wine called Retsina, and was originally used to prevent wine from turning sour.

*Retsina is made like any other white (or rose) wine, except that small pieces of resin from the Pinus halepensis pine are added to the must and left with the wine until the first racking separates the finished wine from all solids. Major producing areas are Attica, Euboea, and Boeotia, all in the southern part of central Greece close to Athens, but Retsina is also made for local consumption all over the country. Savatiano is usually the principal grape, often enlivened with some Rhoditis or occasionally Assyrtiko, but a wide range of local grape varieties are also used. An interesting Muscat Retsina is made on the island of Lemnos.*

The "Lone Pine", *Pinus brutia* (Turkish Pine) was once described as *Pinus halepensis* var. *brutia* but differs by having longer needles (10-15cm) and cones at right angles.

