

Learning about Loblolly Pine *Pinus taeda*

Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*) is native to the southeastern United States. The name “loblolly” means a low, wet place, but the tree is not restricted to low, wet areas. This species has a very rapid growth rate, even compared to other species of southern pines. Loblolly Pines are valued for their highly prized yellowish, resinous wood and are extensively grown on commercial tree plantations. Loblolly Pine forests provide habitats for many animals, including white tail deer, turkey, squirrels, rabbit, quail, and doves. They also provide habitats for fox squirrels, which eat the cones, and Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, which sometimes nest in old growth trees.

Characteristics. Loblolly Pines are large evergreens that grow up to 25-33 m (90-110 feet), standing long and slender, with a rounded, spreading crown. They have grayish-brown, elongated bark, and scaly, reddish-brown young twigs. Their needle-like leaves are 4 to 9 inches long, grow in bundles of three, and have a bluish-green color.

Fruit. Loblolly Pines have dark brown cones that are usually 3 to 6 inches long and remain on the trees for many seasons. A large number of cones are produced every year by the tree. The cones are easily seeded and the fast growing seeds can be very aggressive invaders in unplanted fields.

Geographic Range. Loblolly Pine trees can be found throughout most of the southeastern United States from New Jersey to central Florida, west to Texas, and east to Tennessee. They grow mostly in coastal plains and at mountain bases.

Additional Information.

- Because of its high leaf litter and biomass productivity, Loblolly Pine is being studied as a possible alternative source of energy.
- At the Augusta National Golf Club, a Loblolly Pine on the 17th hole is named the “Eisenhower Tree” because former President Dwight D. Eisenhower hit it so many times, he asked the club to cut it down.
- Loblolly Pine trees mature at 150 years old and grow until about 300 years old.
- Loblolly Pines are planted to help stabilize eroding and damaged soils.
- Wildlife will often take refuge from windstorms in Loblolly Pine forests.

References:

Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*), 2000, Florida Forest Trees, http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/4h/Loblolly_pine/loblpine.htm
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