

■ LUMBER 411

By Jeff Easterling

The 411 on red pine

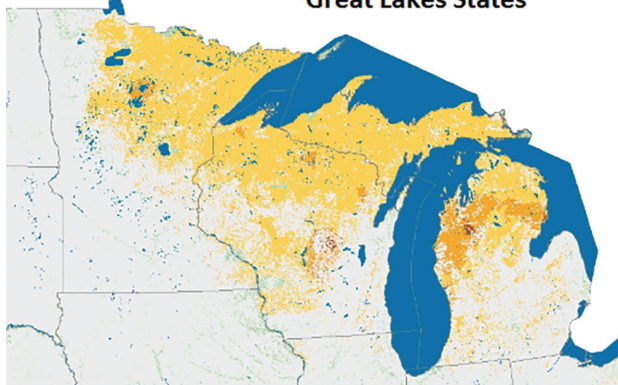
PINUS RESINOSA. Red pine. Norway pine. Northern pine. Eastern red pine. Pin rouge. Whatever you call it, red pine played—and continues to play—a huge part in the growth of the Midwest Great Lakes area.

Native to North America, red pine is a softwood coniferous evergreen with long, dark greenish-yellow needles and thick bark that features sneak peeks of red. It grows well in well-drained, dry, rocky slopes and, while it's intolerant of shade, it tolerates the wind and cold very well thanks to its wide spreading root system. Its tall, straight growth can lead to frequent self-pruning, resulting in long, branchless stretches below a domed canopy.

Planted heavily by FDR's Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s as part of the effort to reforest abandoned agricultural land, red pine is prevalent throughout Minnesota (where it was named the official State Tree), Wisconsin and Michigan. Its footprint officially stretches from the Great Lakes region and Manitoba then back east in a swath toward Maine. Many high elevation areas in between might feature red pine as well, with known plantation plantings throughout several of the New England states. However, it's the Great Lakes region where red pine is king of the softwood lumber species!

This moderately fast growing, straight, nice-looking tree may be easily cultivated in nurseries and is frequently raised on pine plantations. A favorite of landowners, the red pine requires very little care once established.

**Red Pine Growing Region
Great Lakes States**



Red Pine: How It's Used

Red pine lumber, classified as part of the SPFs group for strength property purposes, is a valuable timber, pulp wood, and landscaping crop. The top two dominant red

pine lumber products are stud grade and #2 dimension, with additional uses to include poles, fence posts, logs for cabins, railway ties, pulp for paper production, and firewood. Red pine bark is similar to western species used in landscaping and is becoming more popular as a bark mulch. You might even see a beautiful red pine tree decorated with lights and ornaments in December!

Pressure treating expands the lumber's end use into various ground-contact applications.

A few little-known uses of red pine: The bark was once used in the leather tanning process, and rows of trees for wind breaks are often planted to keep cows warm and allow crops to grow unfettered by the rougher side of Mother Nature.

Red Pine Lumber By the Numbers

Under the umbrella of NELMA, there are seven red pine lumber producing mills which, combined, account for 90% of the red pine production nationwide.

In 2018 (most recent figures), NELMA mills produced 402 million bd. ft. of red pine lumber from mills located in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The Market for Red Pine

As is the case with the majority of U.S.-grown wood species, the primary market is the same as the wood's growth footprint. With a continued emphasis on locally grown products throughout the LBM industry, regionally popular wood species should continue their popularity.

Red pine is frequently credited with having built the major metropolitan areas throughout the Midwest – we're looking at you, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Milwaukee, Chicago and Detroit—and extends its reach into peripheral areas such as Iowa and North and South Dakota.

Sustainability

As building products across the board are under intense scrutiny to reveal and share their environmental impact and "greenness," it's important to take an accurate look at the lumber industry. According to many sources, the U.S. forest products industry plants, on average, 2.5-3 trees for each one harvested annually. Reforestation efforts vary from region to region, with some areas coming in with a much higher ratio. Our forests—including those of red pine—are growing, expanding and healthy, which is good news to all of us who live among them.

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