

# LET'S LEARN MORE ABOUT: JACK PINE

— BY JEFF EASTERLING

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**OVER THE LAST** three years of *Lumber 411* columns, we've shared information on every single wood species under the purview of the Northeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association, with the exception of one. It's time to talk about jack pine.

While the species name certainly sounds like that of an international spy, jack pine is also known as Banksian pine, black pine, blackjack pine, gray pine, Prince's pine, scrub pine, and even *pin gris* if you're in French Canada.

Jack pine is a scrubby little medium-sized (and sometimes small) evergreen with a noted ability to grow in poor soils. With top heights reaching 35-50 feet, the species is one of the most cold-hardy and drought-tolerant trees known.

You might see it used as a wind-break on farms, or as part of a watershed management plan, but jack pine is also used as pulpwood, construction lumber, fence posts, timbers inside a mine, railroad ties, telephone poles, and even Christmas trees. With so many uses of the species possible, the hard and heavy jack pine is a very important species in Canada and the Great Lakes region.

Remember back when we discussed Norway spruce, we learned about how the Civilian Conservation Corps planted the trees on unused farmlands following the Great Depression to keep the land from going to waste? Just like the Norway spruce, the jack pine is frequently



## JACK PINE FUN FACT!

When exploring your typical jack pine stand, it's possible to see as many as two million seeds per acre stored in unopened pinecones. How to open the pinecones? Fire is the only thing that will melt the resin sealing the cone closed, thereby releasing the seeds.

planted on land around mines as part of the rehabilitation process.

The jack pine cones are special in that they traditionally point forward along the branch and sometimes circle it. It's not uncommon for the cones to remain unopened on a branch for up to a decade.

By age 75, most jack pines are on their way out; it's rare to find any within a stand over 200 years old.

As we've shared, jack pine is one of 10 species included in the Spruce-Pine-Fir south (SPFs) grade grouping, joined by red, black and white spruce;

Norway spruce; balsam fir; red pine; Engelmann spruce; sitka spruce; and lodgepole pine. The SPFs grouping covers various commercially important species, with the "s" designating the lumber as originating from logs grown in the United States.

## Where Does It Grow?

Jack pine is mostly found in the Great Lakes area of the U.S. and up into Canada. The major portion of this growth is found in Canada from the Northwest Territories all the way cross country to Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. Further south in the States, jack pine is found in Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, the northern part of New York, and Wisconsin.

## How Much Is Used?

Over the most recent years, the volume of jack pine used has continued to decrease, primarily due to jack pine budworm outbreaks.

— For more information on jack pine or other New England/Great Lakes wood species, visit [www.nelma.org](http://www.nelma.org).



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