

Murmuring Pines and Hemlocks

When Longfellow, a Maine native, describes, in his epic poem "Evangeline", the "Forest Primeval, the Murmuring Pines and Hemlocks", he is referring to two of the most iconic trees in the Maine forest.

The Eastern White Pine:

There are many varieties of "Pinus Strobus", but the most important to Maine is the Eastern White Pine, the State Tree and its pine cone and tassels, the State Flower.

Beginning in the 1600's, almost 200 years before Maine became a State, the British Royal Navy tagged pine trees of a certain size that grew within 3 miles of water, for masts on English ships. Since that time, and especially after 1820 when Maine separated from Massachusetts, the Eastern White Pine has been a staple of the Maine Economy.

The Eastern White Pine is found throughout Maine in all kinds of locales, but develops best in fertile, well-drained soil. It grows rapidly in height and diameter, growing a foot or more each year. When growing in the open its shape is symmetrical and conical and can grow to 100 feet, but more commonly attains a height of 70-80 feet with a trunk diameter of 1-3 feet. Its evergreen needles are 3-5 inches long in clusters of 5. The cones are 4-8 inches in length with a long stem. The cones take 2 years to mature the open to discharge their seeds after ripening in late August through September of the second season.

The Pine's wood is light in color and soft, and while no longer used for ships' masts is found extensively in housing and boat planking. Lower grade pine pulp wood is used in paper making. With many of the paper mills closing that aspect of our economy is uncertain.

Unfortunately, the Pine is susceptible to the White Pine Weevil which kills the tree's top shoots and affects its growth.

The Eastern White Pine is an integral part of the Maine Forest. We should appreciate its beauty and versatility and its importance in the history and economy of the State of Maine.

The Eastern Hemlock:

Tsuga Canadensis, the Eastern Hemlock, another commonly found tree in the Maine Forest, is not as easily recognized as the Pine with its long needles or the Balsam Fir with its distinctive aroma. However, the Hemlock is found in scattered stands in every

part of Maine. It prefers a moist cool soil and tolerates shaded environments. The Hemlock can attain a height of 60-70 feet and a diameter of 2-3 feet. The trunk tapers from the base to the top and as a result, sways in the breeze. Its needles are flat and tapering, becoming rounded at the tip, but arranged so that their twig appears flat. The needles are shorter toward the tip of the twig and are dark, yellow-green and shiny on the upper surface and whitish on the lower surface.

Hemlock wood is brittle when dry and difficult to work with, but is light and strong and can be used for framing, roof boards and pulp wood. The bark is no longer used in the leather tanning process

The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid is a serious threat to the health of the Hemlock and the Maine Forest and would be greatly diminished by its loss as a result of this Pest.