

Asia, Pacific Islands

**Common names:** **English:** Casuarina, whistling pine.

**Ecology:** Native to Asia and the Pacific from North and North East Australia to India and Sri Lanka, including Malaysia and Indonesia. The range has been extended by man to India, tropical and subtropical America and Africa. In Uganda it does well in the Rift Valley areas and where the climate is dry but with adequate soil moisture in the ground. Often planted in homesteads and as an avenue tree. It does best in loose sandy soils provided there is subsoil moisture, but it will not withstand waterlogging, although it can tolerate some salinity. The extensive root system and nitrogen-fixing root nodules enable the tree to grow in poor soils. It is common along the coast of East Africa.

**Uses:** Firewood, charcoal, poles, timber, tool handles, fodder (young branches), shade, ornamental, mulch, nitrogen fixation, soil conservation, windbreak, dye, tannin (bark).

**Description:** A tree to 20 m with "weeping" foliage (branchlets). **BARK:** grey-black cracked with age, peeling off in strips. **LEAVES:** minute scales just visible on the green branchlets, **branchlets to 30 cm hang down in crowded tufts.** **FLOWERS:** pollen-bearing tips on some branchlets; female flowers in tiny heads with red stigmas. **FRUIT:** woody and prickly, brown, like "cones", in clusters, **to 2.5 cm long**, releasing hundreds of tiny winged seeds.

**Propagation:** Seedlings and wildings.

**Seed:** Collected from cones of mature trees. Cones should be collected before releasing the seed but after turning grey and left to open over polythene sheeting. No. of seeds per kg: 600,000-900,000. The tree seeds prolifically. Germination rate 50-70% with good seed.

**treatment:** not necessary.

**storage:** in cool, dry conditions the seed can be stored for at least a year.

**Management:** Fast growing; side pruning to get a clear bole, pollarding, coppices while young.

**Remarks:** Appropriate for reclaiming and improving sandy soils. Tolerant of saline soil but susceptible to termites. Dry branchlets on the ground decay slowly, suppress undergrowth and may be a fire hazard.

