

Pinus caribaea

Pinaceae

Central America

Common names: **Eng:** Caribbean pine, pitch pine, slash pine; **Swah:** msindano.

Ecology: In its natural range it grows at low elevations **and** has now become an important commercial plantation tree in many tropical lowlands below 1,000 m. There are three geographic varieties. In Tanzania it is grown in the coastal lowland areas and around Lake Victoria at Buhindi and Rubya. The tree does better on free-draining soils and is drought resistant.

Uses: Firewood, timber (heavy and light construction), poles, plywood, pulp (long fibre), fibreboard, resin.

Description: An evergreen tree with a straight bole and regular **spreading crown** up to 30 m high. The bole can reach over 1 m in diameter. **BARK:** thick, brown-grey, rough and flaking, **resinous if cut**. **LEAVES:** needles, usually in **threes**, erect, flexible, dark green up to 21 cm long, usually less **sharp pointed**. **FLOWERS:** male and female flowers produced separately on the same tree. Male flowers on the upper part of branchlets, female on the lower part. **FRUIT:** cones, greyish brown at maturity, **spiny, about 8 cm** long. **Seedlings.**

Propagation:

Seed info.: No. of seeds per kg: about 30,000. Germination sporadic, up to 6 weeks. Germination rate 35%.

treatment: not necessary.

storage: can retain viability for a long period at room temperature if kept dry.

Management: Fast growing; pruning, thinning, fire protection. Rotation period 35-45 years.

Remarks: Difficult to get seed as trees in the established plantations and seed stands do not produce cones. The timber is strong, moderately light weight and fairly durable, easy to season, saw and preserve. Mycorrhiza are necessary for sapling growth so add soil from next to established trees. Both thinnings and pruned branches provide valuable fuel. In some countries the tree is used as pulp for the paper industry.

