
Evergreens Everywhere

Now is the season when the conifers, the beautiful shapely evergreens, sparkle. Winter winds whistle through their swaying limbs. Misty clouds wreath their crowns. Snowflakes, when they come, decorate their branches. Rain drips. Icicles hang. The refreshing scent permeates the chill air. Small colorful birds twist and tweak at the seeds in their cones, chattering all the while.

Our forest has more than ten different kinds of cone-bearing trees. They include bigcone spruce, Coulter pine, incense-cedar (pictured right), Jeffrey pine, limber pine, lodgepole pine, pinyon pine, ponderosa pine, sugar pine, western juniper, and white fir.



Pine needles are wrapped in light-brown papery sleeves like bouquets of cut flowers. Sugar and limber pines have five needles per bunch. Coulter, Jeffrey and ponderosa, (these two are sometimes grouped together and called yellow pines), have three long needles in each bundle. Lodgepole has two and our variety of pinyon pine, one.

Incense-cedar has yellow-green scale-like leaves on twigs that look like they have been ironed flat. Western juniper also has scale-like leaves, but they are round in cross section and the twigs encircle the branches.



Bigcone spruce (pictured left), a relative of the more common Douglas-fir, and white fir are familiar to us as fragrant Christmas trees. Both of these have individual needles attached directly to the branch. Those of white fir have two white lines.

How well do you know our forest trees? Take this simple quiz and see!

1. What is the tallest tree in the Angeles National Forest?
2. What is the most common coniferous tree in the Angeles National Forest?
3. What is the oldest living tree in the Angeles National Forest?
4. Which tree has the heaviest pine cones in the world?
5. Which tree has the longest pine cones in the world?
6. Which tree has the longest needles in the world?
7. Which tree has only two short needles per bundle in the Angeles National Forest?
8. Which coniferous tree grows at the lowest elevation in the Angeles National Forest?
9. Which coniferous tree grows at the highest elevation in the Angeles National Forest?
10. Which coniferous tree had the largest diameter in the Angeles National Forest?

Answers: 1. sugar pine; 2. Jeffrey pine; 3. limber pine, about 2,000 years; 4. Coulter pine, up to 9 pounds; 5. sugar pine, 10 - 24 inches; 6. Coulter pine, up to 12 inches; 7. lodgepole pine; 8. bigcone spruce, 900 feet; 9. limber pine on Mt. Baldy; 10. western juniper, 15.15 feet in diameter. Jane Strong