

# Forestry 101

Forestry for Woodland Owners

## Conifers of Kentucky

by Doug McLaren

Kentucky is dominated by hardwoods. Annually, Kentucky ranks within the top five hardwood lumber producing states in the nation. This success is a result of the state being nearly 50% covered in forests, producing some of the finest assorted species of oak, hickory and yellow-poplar. Conifers only make up a very small percentage of Kentucky's forest base, unlike that of the pine-producing states of the deep South.

Many people enjoy having the opportunity to visit Kentucky's woodlands, and they have a much better appreciation of the visit if they are able to identify the trees. At times trying to learn all of the hardwood species can be overwhelming, due to the sheer numbers, but learning the conifers native to Kentucky can be less intimidating, since there are only a handful. Here is a quick summary of Kentucky's conifers and how to identify them on your next visit to a Kentucky woodland.

Many of the pines have needles that grow in bundles or clusters (this page), the more scientific term is fascicles. While other conifers have needles that are arranged individually (next page).

### Virginia pine (*Pinus virginiana*)

has two short slightly twisted needles per fascicle and the needles are approximately one-and-a-half to three inches long. Virginia pine is found throughout the state.



Photo courtesy: Chris Evans, River to River CWMA, [www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org)

### Shortleaf pine (*Pinus echinata*)

is found on the drier sites of eastern Kentucky's landscape and is identified by having two to three needles per fascicle, with each being three to five inches in length.



Photo courtesy: Steve Baskauf, <http://bioimages.vanderbilt.edu/>

### Loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*)

although not a native species, is a visible member of Kentucky's conifer family due to the extensive plantings found in western Kentucky. Loblolly pine can be identified by having the longest needles, varying in length from five to 10 inches and three needles per fascicle.



Photo courtesy: Paul Bolstad, University of Minnesota, [www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org)

### Eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*)

is found generally in eastern Kentucky and also in many Kentucky home landscapes. White pine can easily be identified by being the only five-needled native conifer in Kentucky. Each needle is approximately three to five inches long.



Photo courtesy: Bill Cook, Michigan State University, [www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org)

### Pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*)

has the unique distinguishing feature of having three needles per fascicle, with the length from one-and-a-half to five inches. Pitch pine is found on the drier upper sandy ridge tops.



Photo courtesy: Keith Kanoti, Maine Forest Service, [www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org)

*Kentucky Trees and How To Know Them* is available for \$1.50. This booklet covers 87 of the most common trees in Kentucky and provides information on where they grow and ID characteristics. To purchase one, please send a check for \$1.50 made out to UK Forestry to: UK Forestry Extension, 216 T. P. Cooper Bldg., Lexington, KY 40546.



### **Eastern hemlock** (*Tsuga canadensis*)

is found almost exclusively along the streams of eastern Kentucky.

The needles are arranged on the stem individually, are flat and are less than an inch long. The best way to confirm eastern hemlock is to turn the individual needle over and look for the two pale white lines running the length of the needle.

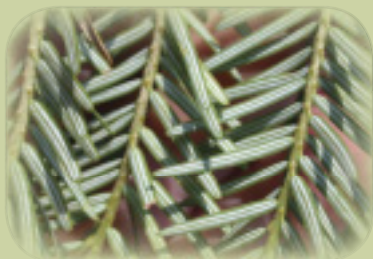


Photo courtesy: Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources - Forestry Archive, [www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org)

### **Baldcypress** (*Taxodium distichum*)

is found exclusively in very watery sites and swamps of western Ken-

tucky. The easiest way to identify the tree is the extremely flared base of the tree when it is viewed from a distance. The needles grow individually and are less than one inch long. The tree is deciduous, losing its needles in the winter.



Photo courtesy: Paul Wray, Iowa State University, [www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org)

### **Eastern redcedar** (*Juniperus virginiana*)

is a tree found throughout Kentucky, but found extensively in those areas that have limestone outcrops. Eastern redcedar has a very dense foliage with a small, scale-like prickly needles less than a 1/2 of an inch in length on new growth.



Photo courtesy: Paul Wray, Iowa State University, [www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org)

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