

# Ponderosa Pine

(*Pinus ponderosa*)

Linda R. McMahan, PhD.  
Horticulturist, Oregon State University

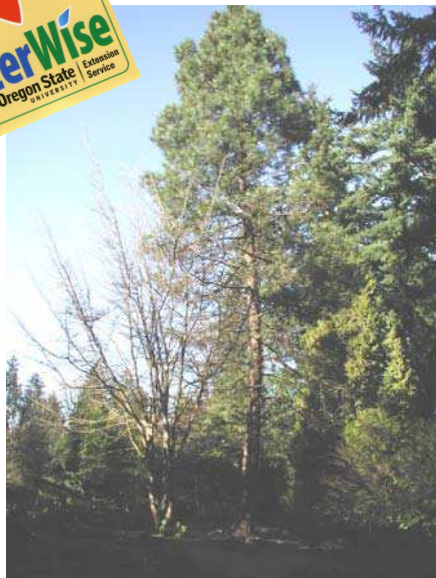


A commonly held notion is that Ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) is native only east of the Cascades in Oregon. Indeed, as one crosses the mountain passes going east, you are greeted with beautiful forests, with a yellow cast that gives credence to its other common name of “yellow pine.” However, Ponderosa Pine is also native to the west side of Oregon. In times of European settlement, it was found scattered throughout the Willamette Valley, often near stream banks. Also, Ponderosa pine is one of the WaterWise trees for the Willamette Valley.

According to the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (<http://www.oregonforests.org/content/treeDetails.asp>), the Ponderosa pine found in the Willamette Valley is genetically very different from trees found in eastern Oregon. The site goes on to note that historically, the range has been significantly reduced by agriculture, but it is capable of growing throughout most of the Willamette Valley. Potentially, it is a valuable tree for use in plantings in or near wetlands and because of its deep tap root, is suited to urban uses as well.

Once it became known that a few remnant populations of the Westside Ponderosa pine still remained, foresters began efforts to collect cones from these stands and propagate seeds to grow plants for distribution and reestablishment. 1994 saw the formation of the Willamette Ponderosa Pine Program (<http://www.westernforestry.org/wvppca/>), whose purpose was to conserve the genetic resources of the Willamette Valley race and propagate plants to become new pine plantations. This nonprofit group worked with the Oregon Department of Forestry and other private groups to carry out their program. The results are that the Willamette Valley form of Ponderosa pine is now relatively easy to obtain. It is offered for sale by many of the Soil and Water Conservation programs in western Oregon and it readily available at native plant nurseries.

If you are seeking one for your own landscape or property, make sure you get the right form. If it is not labeled, it is probably the kind from drier areas of the West.



Ponderosa pine in ornamental planting at The Berry Botanic Garden, Portland, OR