

THE LONE PINE - *Pinus halepensis*

Origins

Lone Pine or Plateau 400 was the scene of a major diversionary offensive launched by the 1st Australian Infantry Division on 6 August 1915. The Turks had cut down all but one of the trees that clothed the ridge to cover their trenches. The ridge dominated by the single Aleppo Pine (*Pinus halepensis*) became known as Lonesome Pine. In three days of fighting the Australians lost more than 2000 men and the Turks losses were estimated at 7000. Seven Victoria Crosses were awarded.

As far as we know three Australian soldiers souvenired pine cones from the ridge that found their way back to Australia.

Lance Corporal Benjamin Smith of the 3rd Battalion, whose younger brother Mark, who enlisted under the surname Drice, was killed at the tree on the 6th August 1915 in the battle for Lone Pine Ridge, sent a cone home to his mother, Mrs McMullen at Cardiff in New South Wales. Mrs McMullen kept the cone for 13 years before planting the seeds in 1928. She grew two seedlings, one of which she presented to the town of Inverell that was planted in January 1930 and the other to the Parks and Gardens section of the Department of the Interior in Canberra. The Duke of Gloucester planted this second tree at the Australian War Memorial in October 1934. Today it stands over 20 metres in height.

SGT Thomas McDowell of the 23rd Battalion carried a pinecone in his haversack until the end of the war. Upon returning home to Australia he gave it to his aunt, Mrs Emma Gray, who lived at Grassmere near Warrnambool, Victoria. A decade or so later Mrs Gray planted the seeds and four seedlings were grown. One was planted in May 1933 in Wattle Park, Melbourne. Another at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne and another at the Soldiers Memorial Hall at The Sisters. The last was planted in the Warrnambool Gardens.

Lou Henley of the 9th Light Horse, who lived at Ungarie NSW, gave cones to his mother that also germinated. Some of these trees were planted on their property 'Lone Pine' and in the town.



Recent Distribution

In 1990 two trees were taken back to Gallipoli with war veterans who attended the memorial service to mark the 75th anniversary of the battle of Lone Pine.

Since the 1980s many trees have been grown by both seed and grafting techniques from material collected from the tree at the Australian War Memorial. These have been disseminated to many organisations including RSL branches and clubs, schools and other interested organisations.

Availability

Yarralumla Nursery now propagates a number of trees from seed collected from the tree at the Australian War Memorial. These are generally available throughout the year and can be purchased at the Yarralumla Nursery.

All enquiries regarding the purchase of Lone Pine seedlings should be directed to the Nursery preferable by email to Yarr.nursery@act.gov.au or by phone on 62072446.

Conditions and Care

The Lone Pine grows best in full sun and well drained position. It grows about 20 metres in height and 15 metres in width. The tree benefits from deep summer watering and a slow release fertiliser to ensure a strong growing specimen.

This tree can handle a wide range of soil pH's from acidic to alkaline. It can also grow in a wide variety of soils from clay to loam as long as it drains well.

Your pine tree should not need much pruning unless you are taking out a wayward branch or removing parts that are dead, diseased or damaged. You can control growth and shape to some degree by removing the conifer candles (new growth) when they first appear.

Common uses are around Memorial parks, roadside planting or as a windbreak.