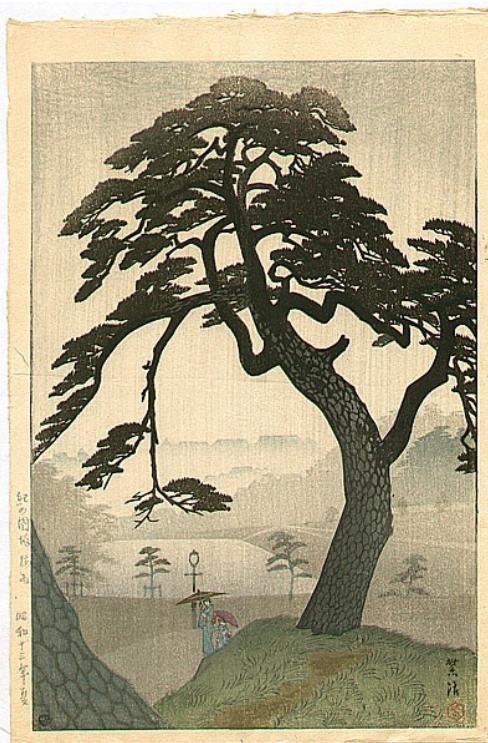


Hughie Jones – March 2012

***Pinus parviflora* Glauca Group
Blue-Needled Japanese White Pine**



Pine in Rain
by Shiro Kasamatsu 1898-1992

The Japanese white pine (*Pinus parviflora*) is a graceful, irregularly-shaped tree. It creates a striking landscape element wherever it is used. Its cultivar (*Pinus parviflora* 'Glauca Group') is well placed beside the Korean hexagonal pavilion not only for aesthetic reasons but also for symbolic ones.

In Korea since ancient times, the hexagonal pavilion has been in places of great natural beauty. It provided a focus to the landscape and was seen as a balance between heaven and earth. It symbolized man's spiritual relationship to the universe.

In Korea pine trees are synonymous with integrity, purity and long life. A sacred pine was believed to connect the three worlds of existence. In the Korean myth of Cumong, the hero's legitimate son is recognized when he is able to find half of his father's sword at the base of a pine tree growing out of a heptagonal stone. In Japan, the pine tree symbolizes strong character and energy because it holds up against strong winds. And in China, the Taoist practice of surviving only on

pine needles to gain supernatural powers has its roots in the pine tree's symbolism of integrity and honour.

It's good to remember these positive symbols of pines since lately pines have been suffering. In North America the lodgepole pine has been under attack by the pine beetle. The whitebark pine has both a beetle and fungus attacking it, and the Bishop pine a fungus that has already destroyed most of the wild stands of its neighbour, the Monterey pine. Another pine, the Torrey, is just hanging on by the skin of its teeth.

But if you can wait it out and have a lot of time on your side, these pines might reappear healthy in another era. Pines evolved in middle latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere in the middle Mesozoic (200 – 65 million years ago). They spread east and west throughout Laurasia (the vast continent of the northern hemisphere) attaining high diversity in eastern Asia, the eastern U.S. and western Europe. But they had little representation at high northern latitudes.

Then at the beginning of the Tertiary (65 million years ago) the climate changed to warm and humid tropical conditions throughout the middle latitudes. The pines disappeared from these areas. The pines shifted during three warm periods of the Eocene (56-34 million years ago) to cooler areas. At the end of the Eocene when the climate cooled and dried, pines recolonized middle latitudes, a zone they've occupied to the present.

Today pines are one of the most widely distributed conifers in the Northern Hemisphere. Japanese white pine (*Pinus parviflora*) grows in the mountains of Japan at elevations of 2500 m. It's often found growing in very dry acidic soil on the mountain ridges. Japanese white pine is named for its unusually small seed cones. This five-needed pine has short slightly twisted needles, which can be an indicator of stressful growing conditions. Its brownish, red cones stay on the tree for six or seven years. Different varieties of *P. parviflora* are found in Korea, Taiwan, southern China and northern Vietnam.

Great Plant Picks recommends the cultivar *P. parviflora* 'Glauca Group' as a good tree for large containers or patio planters since its roots are tolerant of restricted areas. The Glauca group grows to 4 m in height and 2.5 m in width and likes full sun to light or open shade with well-drained or sandy soil. Little pruning is needed to maintain its twisted habit and new growth can be broken in half or pinched out to create a denser more compact tree.

Sources: http://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/print_view/1197; Japanese Plants by Kaneko and Richards; Trees & Shrubs for Pacific Northwest by Grant & Grant; Coniferous Forests of Temperate Zone in Asia – Y. Nakamura and P.V. Krestov; Impact of the Eocene on the Evolution of Pines – C.I. Millar