



Bristlecone Pine

Pinus aristata

Engelmann

Many have heard of the antiquity of living bristlecone pines. The oldest living individual thing on Earth is a bristlecone pine, 5,064 years old. However, that is another, closely-related species, *Pinus longaeva*, the Great Basin bristlecone pine. This cousin of that species is the Rocky Mountain bristlecone pine, the oldest known specimen of which is a mere 2,435 years old. *P. aristata* grows in nature on the Rocky Mountain Front range in Colorado and New Mexico, where it grows at elevations of over 7,500 feet. Like white pine, *Pinus strobus*, the needles of this pine are in bundles of five and normally remain on the tree for at least a decade, giving it a densely-clothed appearance. This is not a large tree, normally growing up to 80 feet maximum, and usually much less than that in cultivation, and is very slow-growing. In fact, in cultivation, it's seldom seen to be more than 20 feet tall.

Cultivation

This tree is susceptible to root rot in moist and warm environments. Be sure to plant it in a very well-drained soil, and protect it from heat. It prefers fairly dry, rocky soils and full sun. It is very intolerant of road salt. This species is a great bonsai subject. Hardy to USDA zone 4.

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