

# PLANTS FOR THE LAKE TAHOE BASIN



## Sugar Pine

(*Pinus lambertiana*)

### USES OF SUGAR PINE

Sugar pines have a uniquely beautiful shape and their huge cones are used by many as decorations. Sugar pines provide excellent wildlife habitat, protection from the wind and sun, and privacy for your house.

Their name comes from the sweet sugary substance excreted from their sap.

### DESCRIPTION AND GROWTH CHARACTERISTICS

Called "the most princely of the genus", sugar pine is the tallest and largest of all pines, commonly reaching heights of 200 feet. Sugar pine extends from the west slope of the Cascade Range in Oregon to the Sierra San Pedro Martir in Baja. The most extensive and dense populations are found in mixed conifer forests of the Sierra Nevada.

Sugar pines are drought resistant and thrive in the well-drained, acidic soil of granite origin at Lake Tahoe. Mature trees are also fire resistant due to their thick bark.

### ESTABLISHMENT AND CARE

Plant sugar pine seedlings when they are one or two years old. Seedlings can be planted in the spring or in the fall. Sugar pines like bare mineral soils with plenty of sunshine. Plant at least 20 feet apart because these pines need space to grow tall.

Sugar pines are highly susceptible to a non-native invasive fungus called blister rust. It is recommended that you plant some seedlings resistant to the rust to ensure survival and some seedlings that are susceptible to prevent the rust from morphing into a different strain.

For your seedling, choose a place at least 20 to 30 feet from your house that is not under telephone or utility lines, since the roots and branches may cause damage to these structures as they grow.

Once the tree is in the ground, its success depends on your taking care of it. Bare root plants require special attention and should be watered one to two times per week during the first year. Containerized trees are less fragile but should be watered once a week during the dry summer months. The soil should not be kept saturated, so let them dry out between waterings. Once established, soak your tree once a month during the summer.



Give your tree a "mulch-blanket" of two to four inches of rotten leaves, wood chips, pine straw or shredded bark to insulate the ground, discourage weeds, and retain moisture around the roots. Make sure that the mulch blanket is not piled up on or touching the base of the tree.

Proper planting procedures will ensure the survival and success of your tree for years to come. Consult the information on the other side and follow the steps for planting.

(continued on back)

For more information contact your local conservation district:

#### **In California:**

Tahoe Resource Conservation District  
530.543.1501 ext. 113  
info@tahoercd.org

#### **In Nevada:**

Nevada Tahoe Conservation District  
775.586.1610 ext. 28  
bcp@ntcd.org

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## Planting a containerized tree:

1. Water the tree thoroughly and remove from its pot or container. Dig the hole as deep as the root ball and twice as wide.
2. Check to see if the soil around the hole is too hard - if it is, loosen it up a bit with the shovel.
3. Remove the container from the root ball. (The roots are like the tree's blood vessels and they work best if they are not twisted and knotted up. You might need to straighten them out if they are circling around after having grown in the container). Ensure that the hole is as deep as the roots are long after being untangled.
4. Place the tree in the hole, making sure the soil reaches the same level on the tree as it was in the container. If your tree has burlap around the root ball, place the tree in the hole and then carefully untie the burlap. Leave the burlap lying in the bottom of the hole as it will naturally decompose.
5. Fill in around the root ball with soil and pack the soil with your hands and feet to make sure that there are no air pockets.
6. If you have well-drained or dry soil, make a little berm around the base of the tree with a moat a few feet away from the base of the tree to hold in the water. If you have poorly draining soil or live in a wet area, plant the tree on a mound so that water drains away from the root ball.
7. Use wooden stakes and tree ties to help the tree support itself for the first year. Make sure the ties are not too tight, or the tree might grow into them and damage itself.

## Planting a bare root tree:

1. Plant in early spring or very soon after you obtain a bare root sugar pine. Dig a hole one to two times the diameter of the root system.
2. Scrape the side of the hole with a garden fork. This will help the roots expand into the surrounding soil.
3. Loosen the soil in the bottom of the hole, and pound a stake into the ground on each side of the hole.
4. Place the tree's roots in the loose soil in the center of the hole, making sure they are pointed straight down. The tree should be planted at the same level as it was growing before. Add enough soil to the hole to support the tree and spray the area with water.
5. Back fill more soil into the hole and add more water. Repeat until the hole is filled in. Pat down the soil with the back of the shovel to eliminate air pockets around the roots.



Refer to step 6 of "Planting a containerized tree".

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