

Conifer

Okinawa pine / *Pinus luchuensis* / Ryukyu matsu / リュウキュウマツ

This is the only pine tree endemic to the Ryukyu Islands. It is found in areas of good sunlight along the coast and forest edges. It grows quickly, reaching heights of nearly 15 meters, with a maximum trunk diameter of 1 meter. The bark is dark gray, the long leaves are soft, and the cones are egg-shaped. The wood of the pine has been traditionally used for buildings, furniture, and even firewood. Much of Amami-Oshima's original broadleaf forest was cut down by the forestry industry to make way for pine trees. Recently, many of these pines have been dying off due to an infestation of pine bark beetles, an alien species from North America. This is actually aiding the return of large sections of the natural forest to their original broadleaf-based state, a kind of natural "forest restoration movement."