



*Did you know?
Fun Tree Facts
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I'm a bit red-faced as I just learned that pine trees (pinus species) are native to the Northern Hemisphere. They only appeared in the southern hemisphere in the 1800's when they were imported. How could I have not known that?

Northern Africa is known for its Stone Pine (pinus pineas) which produces wonderful pine nuts. However, this region of Africa is north of the equator. In ancient times the region's climate was more humid.

Pinus patula was introduced in South Africa in 1830, but was only planted extensively in the 1970's. Planted as a timber product, the country is now trying to eradicate the invasive species. It does so well it is replacing native flora and gulping up water from run-off and stream flow (much like the Tamarisk and Russian Olive in Colorado).

Speaking of pines, did you know that pine needles can hang onto a tree for up to 5 years? Most fall off when they reach maturity. Some of my pine trees are almost 15 years old and needles are starting to pile up under the trees. At first I was worried about tree health. However, the trees are fine and since they're not in the lawn, the fallen needles provide a wonderful mulch layer and keep the weeds down.

Did you know that approximately 30 percent of the Earth's land surface is covered by forest? According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations this is so. And forests used to be more extensive. For example, the eastern third of the United States was highly forested until Europeans cut down forests for agricultural land.

What is the world's largest forest region? It's the taiga, the largest natural zone of Russian, which covers almost 3 billion acres -- roughly the size of the United States. It is a coniferous forest located between 55 degrees north latitude and the Arctic Circle.

The Ponderosa Pine is the largest native pine in our area and a favorite due to its long, shiny needles. The largest Ponderosa Pine forest in the world isn't too far away. It's on the north rim of the Grand Canyon.

Know what tree's seed stays in flight the longest? If you've been around Alamosa much, you've probably seen some. It's the cottonwood (populous species). The tiny seed, produced by female trees, is surrounded by ultra-light, white fluff hairs that can carry it on the air for several days. Tree nurseries typically only sell male cottonwoods that produce allergy inducing pollen.

Another native tree in our area has the widest geographical distribution of any tree in North America, according to the "National Audubon Society Field Guide to Trees." It's the quaking aspen (*populus tremuloides*).

There are several types of "trees" that aren't really trees. Ever been to Joshua Tree National Park near Twentynine Palms, California? Not actually a tree, the Joshua tree is a giant yucca plant (*yucca brevifolia*) -- the short leaved yucca. These yuccas may grow as high as 40 feet and the trunks may reach 4 feet in diameter.

It is difficult to determine the age of these plants since they don't have growth rings like real trees, but they are believed to surpass 700 years in age.

The only place on earth in which Joshua Trees live is the Mojave Desert primarily at elevation above 3000 feet. Legend has it that Mormon pioneers named the tree after the biblical figure, Joshua, seeing the limbs of the tree as outstretched in supplication, guiding the travelers westward.

A staple in many people's diet is the banana. And no, it doesn't grow on a banana tree. The banana is the largest herbaceous flowering plant. It's really an herb that has leaves and stems that die down at the end of the growing season. They have no persistent woody stem above ground and are therefore not a tree. The fruit comes from the female flowers which develop without pollination.

Bamboo, although it can be very tree like and can grow to 100 feet tall isn't a tree either. What do you think it is? In recent years bamboo cutting boards, trays, plates, and other utensils have been marketed as "sustainable wood" products. Actually, bamboo is a member of the grass family and giant bamboos are the largest member of grass family.

"The best friend on Earth of man is the tree. When we use the tree respectfully and economically, we have one of the greatest resources of the Earth." Frank Lloyd Wright