

Callitris gracilis

Kaurna name – Narnu

Common name – Scrub Cypress Pine

Callitris gracilis is a native pine that occurs naturally in most states of Australia. Other common names include southern cypress pine, native pine or Murray pine. In South Australia they are widespread in the lower rainfall areas. They grow mostly in sandy, rocky well-drained soils often containing limestone and can appear in dense populations where they are dominant.

Slow growing for the first few years, they will then spurt, producing the mature tree after 5-10 years.

They are drought resistant, tolerating annual rainfall as low as 300mm. Depending on the rainfall, they can grow from a 15 meters, conical shaped tree with a single trunk and dark rough bark to a 3-5 meter bush.

Callitris gracilis is an evergreen tree with flattened shoots bearing small scale-like leaves. The dark green foliage (below) stands out in the dry landscapes making them very distinctive attractive trees.



As they are conifers they do not have flowers, instead it produces small rounded woody cones. These grey-brown cones appear in late spring often associated with clouds of pollen produced on small orange-brown modified leaves 'strobili'. Once fertilised the small cones mature (autum) and open to release the 2-4cm winged seeds



Uses

The wood is durable and resistant to termites. Younger plants grow with a long straight trunk. Indigenous People on the Murray River made a combined canoe pole and fish-spear nearly 4 m long from the wood of the tree.

The heated gum was also used to glue stone to tools such as axes and spear barbs.

The trees are used for shelter, windbreaks and for stabilisation of dune country. They are excellent feature trees for large gardens or parks and are important plants for food and shelter for many bird species.

Interesting Facts

Calli is Greek for beautiful & treis means three (leaves in wholes of 3)

Callitris trees are commonly called **cypress pines** because they are related to, and resemble, northern hemisphere cypresses. However, they are not true pines. Cypress and Pine are two different families of conifers. Pines have clusters of long needle shaped leaves and larger cones.