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Norfolk Island Pine

The Norfolk Island Pine (*Araucaria heterophylla*) is a large-growing evergreen tree, native to Norfolk Island and Australia. This tree grows in a beautifully consistent pyramidal shape, with tiers of graceful horizontal branches arranged in whorls two to three feet apart at maturity. The needle-like leaves are 1/4 to 1/2 inch long, and dark green in color, turning lighter green at the branch tips. In its native habitat, the Norfolk Island Pine frequently produces cones with visible seeds. However, in this country cones are rarely seen.

In nature, the Norfolk Island Pine is a rapidly growing tree that can reach a height of 200 feet (no, we're not kidding). In our area, though, Norfolk Island Pines are pretty much restricted to use as houseplants (they love to "summer" outdoors, but they simply can't take temperatures below freezing)

Planting

Best growth can be expected when potted specimens are set in well-drained soil, in full or at least a half- day of sun. The tree should be planted at soil level, and watered only as needed to prevent wilting. They love a humid atmosphere, but they'll generally thrive indoors in any bright spot.

Fertilizing

The Norfolk Island Pine responds well when fertilized two to three times during its growing season. In spring and summer, use a liquid formula (any of those we sell will do just fine).

Problems

About the only disease problem Norfolk Island Pines are susceptible to is something called Mushroom Root Rot. This is usually caused by overwatering, and it will simply kill the plant (no remedy is available). The best medicine is prevention, so keep your soil draining well, and keep it moist but not continually soggy.

Special Uses

Because Norfolk Island Pines so closely resemble traditional American Christmas trees, they are often decorated for the holidays. Any lightweight ornament can be used, and you can "theme" your Norfolk Island Pine just as you would "theme" any Christmas tree.

With the proper amounts of light, water, and fertilizer, you can expect to receive years of pleasure from your Norfolk Island Pine. If you're like most folks, the only problem you'll encounter is where to put it as it grows increasingly larger! Enjoy!

