

Sciadopitys - Growing Guide

Growing *Sciadopitys Verticellata*

The Japanese Umbrella Pine

Visitors to Burncoose gardens will have seen an elderly 20ft tall *Sciadopitys verticellata* growing near the crossroads beneath a tall monkey puzzle tree and in full shade. It has grown slowly and, although it does have a leading main stem, the small tree also has some competing side shoots which gives it the appearance of a large shrub. If it had been grown in full sun in the open, as it should be, and if the side shoots had been removed many decades ago, then it would be a very much taller and larger tree than it is today.

Sciadopitys verticellata is a genus of only one species which is quite distinct from all other conifers in its foliage and is native to Japan. It is monoecious in that male and female cones are borne on the same tree. The bark peels vertically and is red brown.

The popular name, umbrella pine, refers to the unusual arrangement of its leaves which resemble the ribs of an umbrella. Its glossy linear leaves are borne in whorls at the shoot tips. The new growth is an attractive lighter green which contrasts with the much darker mature foliage.

S. verticellata is a completely hardy tree. At Bedgebury Arboretum and at Fota Arboretum it has reached heights of around 40-50ft but most specimens in gardens are still smaller than this. In Japan, in the wild, it can achieve heights of double this with girths of up to 15ft.

The tree should be grown in a reasonably fertile, moist but well drained soil which is neutral to acidic in full sun but preferably with a little dappled shade from nearby trees. As a young plant after planting out it may need

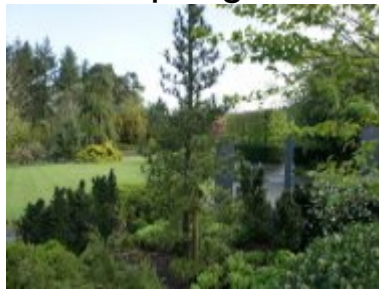
staking to encourage a leading shoot and, once established, side shoots from the main stem may be removed unless you want the plant to grow into a clump rather than a tree.

Female cones are 2-3in long and borne singly. They take two years to ripen. Male cones are much smaller and borne in clusters.

S. verticellata can be propagated from late summer new growth cuttings. These can take six to nine months to root properly. Seed can be sown in the cold frame or in pots in the spring.



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