

Pinecone picking with Michigan DNR

About the program

Looking for an outdoor side hustle? Collecting a bushel of pinecones Sept. 1-30, 2022 will net pickers \$100 and help the Michigan Department of Natural Resources plant trees in state forests. Pinecones can be dropped off by appointment at five DNR locations: DNR customer service centers in Newberry, Gaylord, Roscommon, Cadillac, and Wyman Nursery in Manistique. Gathered red pine seed will be used to replant the state forest when trees die from insect or storm damage or are harvested to produce renewable goods.



Red pinecone

Frequently asked questions

How do I know what to pick?

- DNR will accept ripe cones from **red pine trees**.
- Red pines have craggy, reddish bark.
- Red pines have 4- to 6-inch needles that grow in pairs.
- See more tree ID tips on page 2.

Where can I find red pine cones?

Fresh cones can be found where living red pines have branches that extend close to the ground, including:

- State forest lands
- Federal forest lands
- Private lands – pick only with landowner permission!

How do I know if pinecones are ready to pick?

- If it's your **first time picking**, get a few samples checked before you pick a whole bushel.
- Cone scales should be closed, with a little bit of green or purple tint. If they're all brown and open, they're old.
- Cones should be picked off the tree; cones on the ground are likely to be too old or wet.
- Fresh cones should be firm when squeezed, not soft.

Storage and tagging tips

- Take a note of where you pick. Tag bags on the inside and outside with your name, the county where you picked the cones and whether the cones are natural or from a plantation.
- Cones should be **stored in a cool, dry place** in mesh bags such as onion bags – burlap bags hold moisture and will not be accepted. Storing in a hot or wet place will make cones unusable.

How big is a bushel?

- Two full 5-gallon buckets are equivalent to a bushel.
- Collect cones only – no sticks, needles or debris, they are bad for the seed extraction machine.
- Expect to spend a day in the outdoors picking a bushel of cones.

How do I get paid for my pine cones?

Pickers must register as vendors in SIGMA, the state's online system, in order to receive payment. Cones will be accepted by appointment only – no unscheduled drop-offs. Register here: <https://bit.ly/3sO6Bk5>.

More information

For more information, contact Jason Hartman at HartmanJ@Michigan.gov or by phone at 989-390-0279.

Michigan's forests provide clean air and water, renewable resources, homes for wildlife and places to explore nature. Learn more about sustainable forest management at Michigan.gov/ForestCertification.



Red pine ID >>>

- Red pines have scaly, reddish bark
- Look for 4- to 6-inch needles
- Needles are green
- Needles grow in bundles of two
- Needles will snap when bent
- Cones are egg-shaped
- Tree has a rounded, open crown



Image from the Arbor Day Foundation

<<< Austrian pine ID (Do not pick)

- Needles will flex when bent
- Needles grow in bunches of two or three
- Bark is grayish-brown
- Cones are oval-shaped
- Tree is bushy-looking with a dense crown

Scotch/Scots pine ID >>> (Do not pick)

- Bark is grayish with a red-orange tint
- Bark is papery on young trees
- Needles are 1-2.5 inches long
- Needles are blue-green
- Cones are round to oval in shape



Images from the USDA-NRCS Plants Database and Arbor Day Foundation