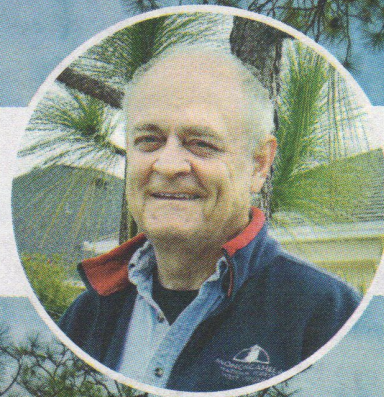


FUN FACTS



Contributed by Villages resident Dan Kincaid, retired forester for the United States Forest Service. To learn more about nature and the forest, find Dan Kincaid's wildlife-inspired book series titled: Kade Holley, Forest Ranger (volume 1 & 2). Available on Amazon.



1. PINE CONES may cling to trees for more than 10 years before dropping to the ground, where you can collect them and use them for crafts.

2. PINE NUTS come from various types of pine cones, and are a healthy iron-rich snack that can boost energy, protect your eyes from certain diseases and support your heart as well.

3. PINE CONES close their scales to protect the seeds from cold temperatures, wind and even hungry animals.

4. IN WARM WEATHER, pine cones open up to release seeds when it's easier for them to germinate (take root). Some cones, such as those from jack pine, lodgepole pine and sand pine trees, require fire to open and release their seeds. Jack pine is most common in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Canada, while lodgepole pine is found in western states, including Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, and Washington, as well as Canada. The sand pine is native to Florida, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. On these trees, a type of resin holds the cones tight but melts from the heat of forest fires, allowing the seeds to fall from the cones.

5. FOREST FIRES can be good for the forest. Those caused by lightning are a natural part of the ecosystem, which help cones to open and seeds to fall from jack pine and lodgepole pine trees. Natural fires also reduce competing vegetation by killing thinner barked trees and allowing thicker barked trees, such as loblolly and slash pine, to survive and increase in growth. Loblolly and slash pines are native to Florida.

6. SEVEN PINE SPECIES grow in Florida. In addition to the slash, sand, and loblolly pines mentioned above, there are longleaf, pond, shortleaf, and spruce pines. Slash pine is the most widespread pine tree in the state, and is common locally. Florida pine cones most often used for crafts include: slash pine with cones from 3 to 6 inches in size; loblolly with cones commonly 4 to 7 inches long, and longleaf cones, which are 5 to 12 inches and sometimes longer.

