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## Wildflower Spot – February 2014

### John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

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## POND PINE

*Pinus serotina*

By Helen Hamilton, *Past-president of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

The leaves of Pond Pine occur 3 or 4 in a bundle, and are almost as long as those of Loblolly, where the leaves are 3, rarely 2 in a bundle. The bark is very different - Pond Pine has small, scaly plates, usually with numerous tufted needles along the trunk, while the bark of Loblolly is thick and rectangular. Pond Pine grows 40-70 feet tall, with gnarled and twisted branches and trunk; Loblolly forms a tall, straight trunk. Young cones appear March -April, but the mature seed cones may remain closed for up to 10 years. They will open following a fire.



This pine is endemic to the southeastern Coastal Plain, growing in swamps and wet soils in a few southeastern counties of Virginia. It grows in wetlands along with Shortleaf Pine (*P. echinata*). The documented range is from Alabama and Florida, to southern Delaware and southeast Maryland. This species is closely related to Pitch Pine (*Pinus rigida*), native to the mountains of Virginia.

The species name *serotina* comes from the Latin *serus*, meaning “late.” Pond Pine is known as a “serotinous” species, since the cones open in response to a hot fire. Fires in the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge have encouraged the growth of Pond Pine forests. ❖

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**Photo:** Pond Pine (*Pinus serotina*) courtesy Will Cook for Carolina Nature  
For more information about native plants visit [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org).