

Press Release
Montana Native Plant Society
www.mtnativeplants.org

Missoula, MT
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Pine needles of five? -Keep it alive!

Are you cutting your own Christmas tree this Holiday Season? The Montana Native Plant Society and the Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation are concerned about the loss of whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) in Montana. These mountain-loving pine trees with needles in a cluster of five, are a great source of food for grizzly bears, Clark's nutcracker, and many other species. But whitebark pine trees are in trouble (see below). This year please don't cut pine trees with five needles. Happy Holidays!

Needles of five, keep it alive!

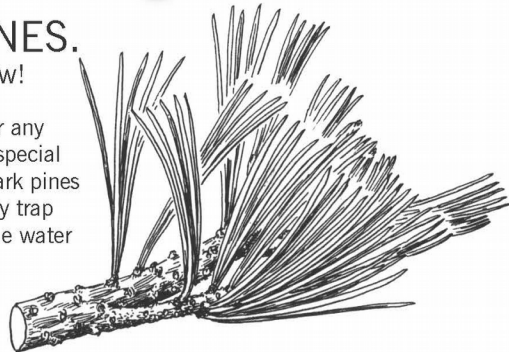
Please do not cut WHITEBARK PINES.

If a tree's needles grow in clusters of five, leave it to grow!

Whitebark pines live in the mountains, often in areas too harsh for any other tree. More than 100 kinds of living things depend on these special pines, including bears and many bird species. People love whitebark pines for their beauty and strength, and we also need them because they trap snow in the high country, slowing spring runoff and helping provide water to the valleys in summer.

But whitebark pines are in trouble. Many whitebark forests now contain more dead pines than living ones.

- Blister rust, a non-native fungus, weakens the trees, reduces cone production, and eventually causes death.
- Whitebarks are also killed by bark beetles, and beetle epidemics may increase with global climate change.
- Wildfires may kill whitebark pines, although burned areas are good habitat for seedlings. Careful management of fire is essential.



So remember: *If it has five, let's keep it alive!*

For more information and to learn how you can help,
visit the Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation at www.whitebarkfound.org.