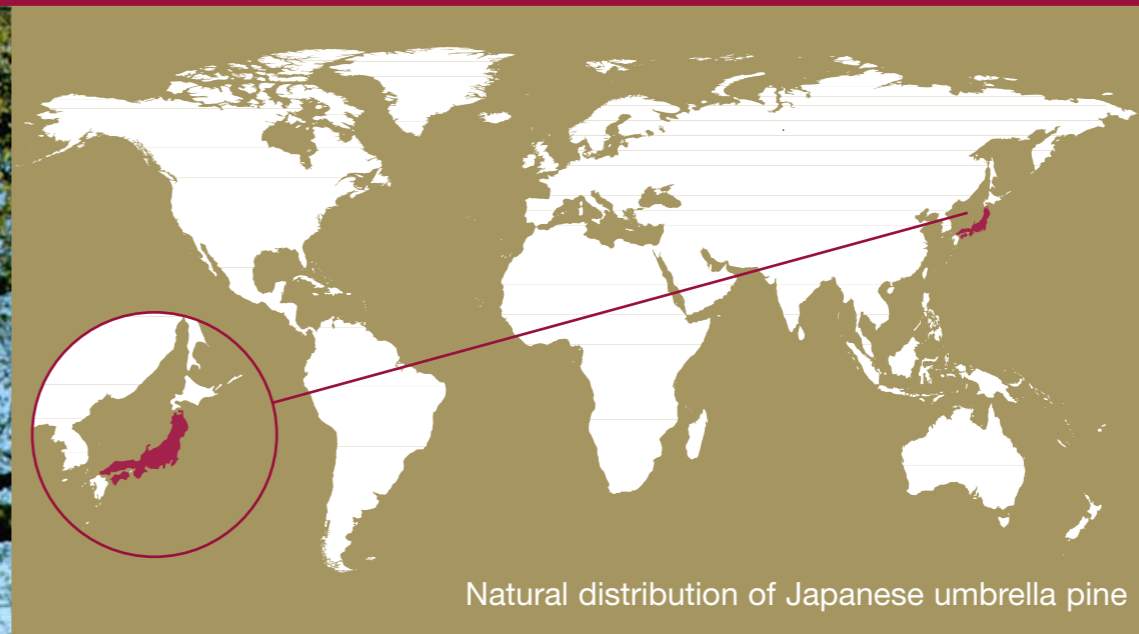


Japanese umbrella pine *Sciadopitys verticillata*



Natural distribution of Japanese umbrella pine



illustration by John White

The 'needles' of this tree are arranged on the end of the stems like the spokes of an umbrella, hence the name. Look closely and you will see that what seems to be a single 'needle' is actually two, fused together.

The end of the line?

This unique tree deserves wider popularity in gardens. It is also a bit more unusual than it seems to be at first...

Nothing else is quite like the Japanese umbrella pine. It's the only remaining type of tree from an ancient family that were around when dinosaurs were just getting going. Over millions of years the other members of the family have become extinct, leaving the umbrella pine in a grouping on its own.

Now there is doubt over the future of this species too. Demand for timber in its native Japan has put the umbrella pine at risk. Staff from the National Pinetum are planning to collect seed from the wild and grow the resulting trees here at Bedgebury to help to conserve them.

Did you know?

The needle-like leaves are not leaves at all – they are actually flattened green stems that do the same job.

The Japanese umbrella pine is considered to be one of five sacred trees in its native Japan. Another sacred tree, the Japanese cedar, is nearby - can you find it?