

## Are pine plantations a threat to your health?

Pine trees (with all their associated fungal organisms) are a natural part of the environment across much of the Northern Hemisphere, and for 60 or more years they have been widely planted in the Southern Hemisphere, without problems to human health.

### Pollen

Asthma complaints are continually rising in Australia and pollen is one of the more common triggers for asthma, hayfever and other allergies.

However, radiata pine has largely been given the all clear as a cause of hayfever.

Researchers in Canberra have found that of 1000 hayfever sufferers there were only three cases where radiata pine pollen was the cause (Bass, pers.comm.).

This is despite a very visible pollination of pine forests, with the pollen coating the ground, cars and buildings in the area at peak times.

Because pine pollen is large (56-70 microns) in contrast to grasses (around 30 microns) the pollen cloud is visible when released. And the pollen is oily so it floats on water.

Grass pollen is usually the allergy culprit (Dellow 1983) with most suffers usually being allergic to Rye Grass (*Lolium perenna*).

In the Albury area, pine pollination commences in July and continues until the end of August.

Whereas, the grasses which are most troublesome, have a later pollination time.



Photo courtesy of State Forests of NSW.

### Further reading

- ▶ Bass D J, Baldo B A, Pham N H (1994), 'Cypress Pine Allergy: identification of allergens and cross reactivity between divergent species', *Journal of Clinical and Experimental Allergy*, vol. 24, no. 6, pp. 558-565.
- ▶ Dellow J J (1983), 'Plants that Cause Hayfever'. 2nd edn, Agfact, P1.8.1, NSW Department of Agriculture.
- ▶ SPIS (State Plantation Impact Study) (1990), *Report and Recommendations*. SPIS Steering Committee, Melbourne.

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