

# The National Tree of Scotland

In January 2013, members of Holyrood's public petitions committee agreed to contact ministers after hearing a plea for the "iconic" Scots pine to be made the country's national tree. Campaigner Alex Hamilton submitted a petition calling for the tree to be given the designation. His petition had the support of a number of environmental organizations. Mr. Hamilton made the case to MSPs in Holyrood that having a national tree for Scotland could be a "valuable symbol" of the commitment to the country's natural environment. He argued that the Scots pine is an appropriate symbol for the country as its numbers are rising again, after being greatly reduced, making it a "symbol of a resurgent Scotland". Mr. Hamilton told MSPs that 70 countries across the world already had a national tree but that Scotland currently did not (see insert for America's National Tree).

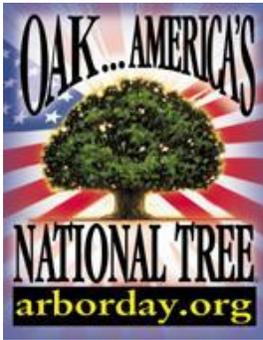
In May, a survey by the Woodland Trust found that two thirds of the public believed the Scots pine should be given the status. The trust said Scots pine was an "iconic species", which also supports a great range of wildlife, including red squirrels, capercaillie and the Scottish crossbill. *"Given the strong appeal of Scots pine, both at home and abroad, making it our national tree would be a fantastic way to celebrate the country's native woodland, and leave a significant legacy for the Year of Natural Scotland."* A Scottish government spokesman said: *"The Scots pine is held in affection by many people and it is often the case that national emblems arise from cultural tradition. However, cultural tradition does not confer any official status and there is no mechanism to formalize the adoption of the Scots pine as Scotland's national tree."* The issue was discussed again by the petitions committee, ahead of a member's debate at Holyrood that same month.

Over the next three months the public will have the opportunity to say whether they would like a designated tree and, if so, which species. The online consultation will set out presentations promoting the Scots pine, the rowan, the birch and the wych elm. However, a Forestry Commission spokesman said any tree could be considered. The consultation will run until 3 December.



Clockwise from left: birch, Scots pine, wych elm, rowan.

Now you might think that America has always had a national tree. Actually, most states had a designated tree long before there was an official National Tree of America.



**Nebraska City, Neb., Dec. 15, 2004** – America has the grandest trees on earth – the largest, the oldest, and some of the most magnificent. Now, with Congressional passage and presidential signing of a historic bill, America has an official National Tree--the oak.

Congress passed legislation so designating the oak in November. The official recognition of oak as America's National Tree reflects a vote hosted by The National Arbor Day Foundation at its website, [arborday.org](http://arborday.org), in which Americans of all ages and from all walks of life helped choose the country's newest national symbol.

"Having oak as our National Tree is in keeping with the wishes of the hundreds of thousands of people who helped choose this striking symbol of our nation's great strength," said John Rosenow, president of The National Arbor Day Foundation.

The oak was selected during a four-month-long open voting process hosted by the Arbor Day Foundation. From the first day of voting, oak was the people's clear choice, finishing with more than 101,000 votes, compared to almost 81,000 for the magnificent runner-up, the redwood. Rounding out the top five were the dogwood, maple, and pine.