Scots pine is an extensive natural range from Scotland in western Europe to the Ura River mountains in eastern Siberia and from northern Norway to the south of Spain. The species was once a native to Ireland, covering large tracts of both mountain and lowland and it is unclear when or how exactly it became extinct. For many years it was thought that the last naturally occurring Scots pine in Ireland disappeared at the onset of the last Ice Age, some 10,500 years ago. However, evidence of man’s involvement in the felling of bog pine and the survival of all bog pine in Ireland at that time, the wood ant, Formica rufa, indicates that the species may have made its disappearance much more recently, perhaps in early Christian times. In fact, Scots pine is still often considered as a native Irish tree. The best stands of Scots pine currently standing in Ireland tend to be of Scottish provenance. Little is known of the suitability of European provenances, but Scotch pine and Northern Siberian species are thought not to be suited for planting in Ireland. Currently, Scottish provenances are most favoured by Irish foresters.

Silviculture & Management in Ireland
Scots pine is a good choice of species on light soils with few drainage issues such as deep peat, brown podzolics, brown earths and sandy soils. Optimising site for growth of Scots pine is about 3.5 and the species does not grow well on chalk or limestone based soils. It does not grow well on exposed peats or any well types at high elevation. Despite this, it is a relatively hardy species, tolerant of late spring and early autumn frosts. Because of this, it should grow well as a suitable species for establishment on milled peat cutaway bogs. Scots pine is a light demanding species and grows very vigorously in its early years. Embarking on vigorous thinning should be early and should concentrate on the removal of aggressive, compactly branched trees leaving the better stems to thrive. Subsequent thinnings should be selective and should concentrate on promotion of full crown development on the best stems in the stand. Planting to necessary in order to establish a number and size of knots in the stem. As Scots pine matures, it becomes self pruning but this can leave large head branches, adversely affecting timber quality. Scots pine is normally grown over a rotation length of 70 to 80 years on good stands in Ireland. Scots pine is now often left to grow beyond the optimal financial rotation because of its popularity as a species of high amenity when mature. In such instances, a natural under-storey of oak, holly and hazel can develop.

Position in Irish Forestry
Scots pine is susceptible to damage from red squirrels which, particularly at pole stage, eat the bark of branches and leaders. This frequently limits the use of Scots pine in non-forestry related uses. Further information on growing Scots pine can be obtained on your local Forest Service Inspectors or any Professional Forester.

Further Information
Further information on the use and growing Scots pine can be obtained from your local Forest Service Inspector or any Professional Forester.