



Lycopodium (spp) L.
Ground pine.

Lycopodiaceae (Club-moss Family)

Blooming season: Not a flowering plant. Spores produced in July-September.

Plant:

Tree like in form, 10-25 cm tall.

Horizontal stem, not a true rhizome; grows at one end only, and the opposite end dies, resulting in the plant slowly moving forward year by year (Billington 1952).



Leaves:

Evergreen, scale like.

Flower:

None, spores are produced on strobilus cones.

Fruit:

None, but what is formed are strobilus cones which are sessile, having no stalks.

Usually 1-3 cones, 1.5-5.5 cm long, maturing July-September.

Spores are sulphur yellow with a high oil content.

Can be confused with:

Many species of *Lycopodium* can be confused and hybrids may also be found.

Geographic range:

Type specimen location:

State: Throughout.

Regional: Newfoundland - Alaska, south to North Carolina and Indiana.

Habitat:

Local: Riparian.

Regional: Moist woods.

Common local companions:

Pine, ferns, maples, and beech



Lycopodium obscurum L.
Ground Pine

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Usages:

Human: Because of the spores have a high oil content and are quite flammable, they were used as flash powder for the first photographic cameras(Harris 2003); for fireworks (Billington 1952); and to imitate lightning flashes for theatrical performances (Millspaugh 1892, 1974). Their oil content led to them being used by pharmacists in boxes of pills to prevent them sticking together (possibly a different species of *Lycopodium*). Medicinal uses in the past included treatments for gout, menstrual disorders, nervous disorders, fevers, and as a styptic and an emetic. The commonest use of the plant has been as Christmas greenery, which is no longer recommended since it destroys the plant and legislation some years ago protected these plants and several others.

Why is it called *that*?

The common name, club-moss, is due to its formerly being considered as a moss; ground pine refers to its appearance as a miniature cedar. *Lycopodium* comes from the Greek word *lykos*, wolf, and *pous*, Greek for foot, due to the perceived resemblance of another species to the outline of a wolf's footprint. *Obscurum* means dark or hidden.

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