

# Scientists fear renewed threat to white pine trees

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Scientists worry that a fungus targeting white pine forests has mutated and could return more than a century after it first hit the United States.

White pine blister rust comes from a combination of white pines and [flowering plants](#)—called ribes (RYE'-beez)—like gooseberries and currants. When infected ribes lose their leaves in the fall, spores of the [fungus](#) invade white pines and eventually kill the tree.

When the fungus first hit in 1909, a massive eradication effort including a ban on ribes, helped stem the destruction.

But a Cornell University researcher found a previously immune currant infected with a mutated form of the fungus in 2011 in Connecticut. Scientists now worry the risk may return.

The U.S. Forest Service is leading a research effort into the fungus.

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