

Cupressus sempervirens (the pencil pine) is an evergreen conifer native to the eastern Mediterranean region including southern Turkey, Croatia, Albania, Greece, northeast Libya, western Syria, Cyprus, northern Egypt, Lebanon, Israel, Malta, Italy and Iran. No wonder it is an international symbol of grief. It has stood there, upright, through centuries of war.

The tree's main references to grief however, come from a story by Ovid.

The Roman poet writes of a young prince from Keos named Kyparissos who was loved by the Greek gods for his beauty. After accidentally killing Apollo's favourite stag with his javelin, Kyparissos was distraught and prayed to Apollo to 'grieve for eternity'. He was then transformed into a cypress tree.

That's the most public version. Ania Walwitz told me that the stag was actually the young man's male lover. He so loved him he couldn't contain the feeling and killed him. He then asked Apollo to allow him to grieve forever.

So, when next I see an image of a Tuscan hillside, with its ochre farmhouse and profile of a solitary pencil pine, I will understand it differently. No longer merely a hollow elegance this and every sighting of pencil pine will bring a potent image of passion and pain that, through the tree's very presence, draws the past into this moment.

What then of the grief necessarily attached to the history of Eucalypts and saltbush you may well ask.

Lyndal Jones 2017

'From the classical evergreen of the Mediterranean', [www.scentcillo.com](http://www.scentcillo.com) 18 April 2017  
'Cupressus sempervirens', <https://en.m.wikipedia.org> 16 April, 2017  
conversation with Ania Walwitz, 14 April 2017

ON CUPRESSUS SEMPERIVERENS AND GRIEF  
The literary path