

Taxodium distichum - Bald Cypress (*Taxodiaceae*)

Taxodium distichum is a very upright, pyramidal, stately tree that tolerates dry to very wet sites. Bald Cypress has fine-textured, medium green summer foliage, good orange-brown autumn foliage, ornamental red-brown exfoliating bark, and winter catkins.

Form



-upright pyramidal growth habit, sometimes becoming upright conical with age
-rapid growth rate

Culture

-full sun
-prefers acidic soils but is adaptable to heavy, alkaline soils (alkaline soils may result in some chlorosis)
-tolerates very dry or very wet sites
-prefers sandy soils
-virtually no diseases or pests of significance
-moderately available, primarily in B&B

Foliage

-spirally arranged along the stems, with the leaves on deciduous branchlet
-linear, very fine-textured, medium green in summer, and becoming cinnamon-brown in autumn before abscising



Flowers

-monoecious, pendulous staminate immature inflorescences to 4" in winter, pistillate flowers, ornamentally insignificant
-Mar.-Apr., with the staminate flowers elongating and swaying in the breeze

Fruits

-1" brown cones maturing in 1 yr., often go unnoticed

Twigs

-stems light green and thin, becoming brown with prominent rounded leaf scars

Trunk

-exfoliating in thin strips with a red-brown color
-trunk very straight with a strong central leader, slowly tapering to the apex
-buttressing "knees" may develop if the roots are submerged in water

FEATURES

-large tree, deciduous conifer
-maturing at about 70' tall x 30' wide under urban conditions, but much larger in the wild (where in the Southern U.S. it may have Spanish Moss hanging from its branches)

Assets

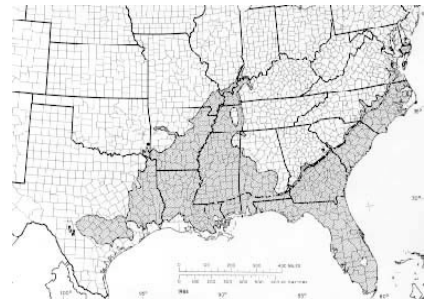
-stately and formal year-round appearance, being a strongly pyramidal focal point that maintains its central leader throughout its life (actually a deciduous conifer)
-rapid growth and establishment
-wet-site-loving and dry-site-adaptable
-ultra-fine-textured foliage (resulting in dappled shade in youth) and fine-textured true stems
-exfoliating strips of subtly ornamental cinnamon bark
-rich cinnamon-brown autumn leaf color
-leaf cleanup in autumn is minimal or not needed
-catkins in late winter and early spring are attractive on mature trees as they sway in the wind
-bark and wood is processed from natural stands in the Southeastern U.S. as a slow-decaying, orange-brown mulch

Liabilities

-none serious
-taproot system makes B&B transplant success difficult with larger caliper saleable trees (hence the practices of field root-pruning of saplings while in production, or growing in containers, should alleviate this problem)

Habitat

-Zones 4 to 9
-Native to Southern U.S. swamps, rivers, and bayous



SELECTIONS

Alternates

-stately pyramidal trees of deciduous foliage (*Alnus glutinosa*, *Liquidambar styraciflua*, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, *Oxydendrum arboreum*, etc.)
-evergreen foliage (*Abies concolor*, *Picea abies*, *Picea pungens*, *Pinus strobus* 'Fastigiata', *Tsuga canadensis*, etc.)
-trees that perform very well in both dry or wet sites (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*, *Gleditsia triacanthos*, *Quercus palustris*, *Salix alba*, etc.)
-trees with fine texture, at least when in foliage (*Gleditsia triacanthos*, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, *Quercus phellos*, *Salix babylonica*, etc.)
-other deciduous conifers (*Larix*, *Metasequoia*, *Pseudolarix*)

Cultivars - Variants - Related species



-*Taxodium distichum* 'Shawnee Brave'
- more narrow than the species form, to 75' x 20'

USAGE

Function

-specimen or focal point tree
-wet or dry site tree

Texture

-fine textured in foliage and when bare
-average density in foliage and when bare

Note: appropriately termed a deciduous conifer, since it sheds its foliage but is a member of the predominately evergreen *Taxodiaceae*