

# 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

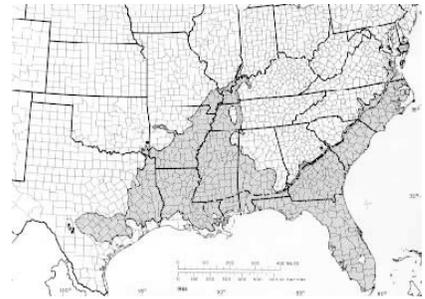
-stately and formal year-round appearance, being a strongly pyramidal focal point that maintains its central leader throughout its life (actually a deciduous conifer)  
-rapid growth and establishment  
-wet-site-loving and dry-site-adaptable  
-ultra-fine-textured foliage (resulting in dappled shade 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*