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.

**FEATURES**

**Form**
- 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)
- 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

**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

**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 glyptostroboideis, 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 glyptostroboideis, Quercus phellos, Salix babylonica, etc.)
- other deciduous conifers (Larix, Metasequoia, Pseudolarix)

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

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