



Taxodium mucronatum Montezuma Baldcypress¹

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INTRODUCTION

Montezuma Baldcypress, Mexico's national tree, is a huge tree in its native habitat and is pyramidal when young with a dense crown but, like Baldcypress, eventually develops into a broad-topped, spreading, open specimen when mature with pendulous branches (Fig. 1). Capable of reaching 100 to 150 feet in height, most landscape specimens will reach this height. The pale green, needle-like leaves are only deciduous in the colder sections of its range, remaining evergreen elsewhere. The trunk grows unusually thick toward the base, even on young trees. One of the most vivid examples of this trait is the Tule Cypress found growing in Oaxaca, Mexico, which sports a trunk diameter of 35 to 40 feet, or a circumference of 115 feet, while the tree itself is only 140 feet tall. This tree has been estimated to be between 2,000 and 5,000 years old.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Taxodium mucronatum*

Pronunciation: tack-SO-dee-um mew-kroe-NAY-tum

Common name(s): Montezuma Baldcypress, Mexican-Cypress

Family: *Taxodiaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: hedge; screen; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

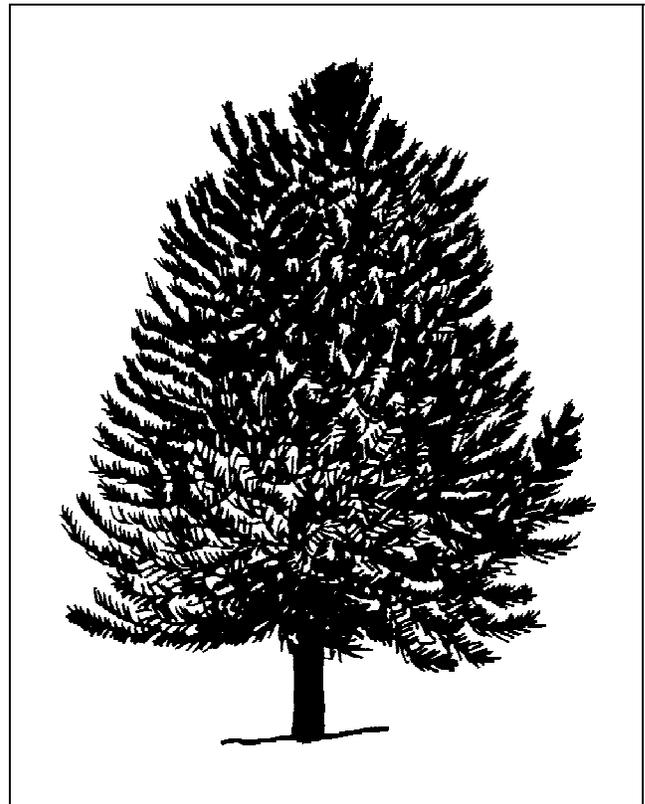


Figure 1. Middle-aged Montezuma Baldcypress.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 50 to 80 feet

Spread: 25 to 35 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: pyramidal; upright

Crown density: dense

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-623, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1994.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Growth rate: medium

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: lanceolate; linear

Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen; semievergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval; round

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches; .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: green

Current year twig thickness: thin

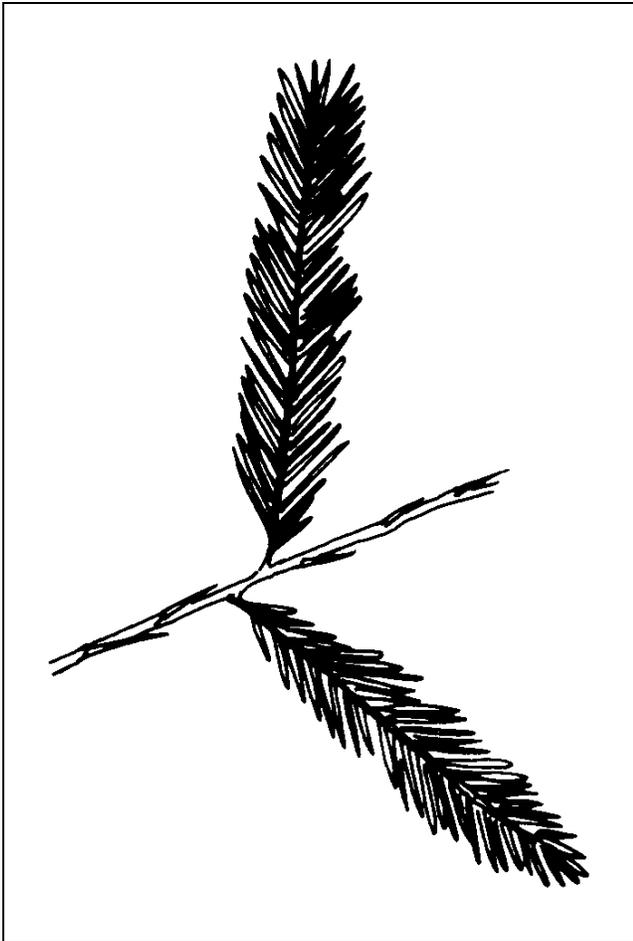


Figure 3. Foliage of Montezuma Baldcypress.

other species since Baldcypress does not. Its delicate, feathery foliage affords light, dappled shade, and the heartwood of Montezuma Baldcypress is quite strong and resistant to rot.

Although not truly a swamp tree as other Taxodiums, Montezuma Baldcypress still grows well in moist soil. Its seeds will only germinate in either water or wet soil. Montezuma Baldcypress is relatively maintenance-free, requiring pruning only to remove dead wood and unwanted lower branches which persist on the tree. It maintains a desirably straight trunk and does not form double or multiple leaders as do many other large trees. In the only test that I am aware of in the East, growth was stunted in Auburn University test plots where no irrigation was provided. Since extensive testing of this tree is lacking in the east, plant only a few of them to evaluate adaptability in your area.

Propagation is by seed.

Diseases

Probably no diseases are serious.

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; extended flooding; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

It provides a good vertical accent to the landscape and could be tried in urban areas. The roots probably will not lift sidewalks and curbs as readily as some