

Taxodium ascendens Pondcypress¹

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INTRODUCTION

Similar to Baldcypress in that the trunk is perfectly straight 50 to 60 feet tall, Pondcypress has a narrower crown, is smaller, and has a more open habit (Fig. 1). It is found along the edges of streams and around the edge of swampy ground where water is standing; whereas Baldcypress is usually found along stream banks. The bright green, awl-shaped leaves are arranged in an upright row formation along the branches when young, giving a somewhat stiffer and more upright appearance than Baldcypress. The leaves turn an attractive light brown in fall before dropping but the bare branches and light brown, ridged bark provide much landscape interest during the winter. The trunk grows unusually thick toward the base, even on young trees. This is thought to provide support for the tree in its wet habitat. The small seeds are used by some birds and squirrels.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Taxodium ascendens*

Pronunciation: tack-SO-dee-um uh-SEN-denz

Common name(s): Pondcypress

Family: *Taxodiaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 9 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); reclamation plant; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; no

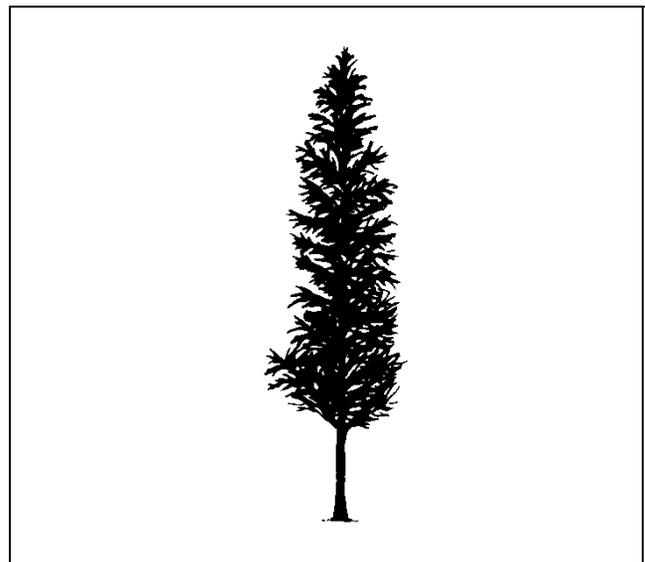


Figure 1. Middle-aged Pondcypress.

proven urban tolerance

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 50 to 60 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

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

Crown shape: columnar; pyramidal; upright

Crown density: open

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate; spiral (Fig. 3)
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** entire
- Leaf shape:** awl-like
- Leaf venation:** none, or difficult to see
- Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous
- Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** copper
- Fall characteristic:** 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:** attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; inconspicuous and not showy; no

significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** grow mostly upright and will not droop; 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

Culture

- Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
- Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; extended flooding; well-drained
- Drought tolerance:** high
- Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate
- Soil salt tolerance:** moderate

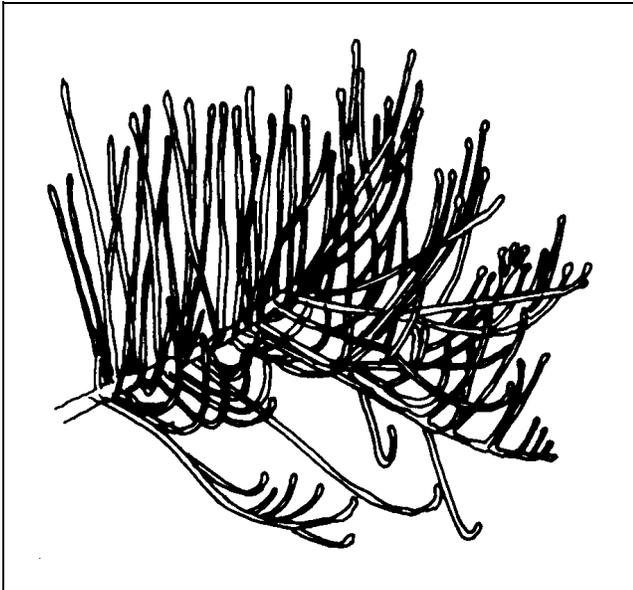


Figure 3. Foliage of Pondcypress.

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

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

Although often seen at water's edge where it will develop "knees", or root projections, that will extend above the water for gas exchange, Pondcypress can also be grown in dry locations and could make an attractive street tree for a very narrow space. Cypress knees do not generally form on these drier sites. The "knees" do not form as readily as on Baldcypress, even on wet sites. It provides a good vertical accent to the landscape and should be used more often in urban areas. The roots do not appear to lift sidewalks and curbs as readily as some other species. Its delicate foliage affords light, dappled shade, and the heartwood is quite strong and resistant to rot. However, most lumber available at lumber yards today is sapwood and is not resistant to rot.

Pondcypress is ideal for wet locations, such as its native habitat of stream banks and mucky soils, but the

trees will also grow quite well on almost any soil, including clay, silt and sand, except alkaline soils with a pH above 7.5. Its drought-avoidance mechanism allows it to drop leaves in extended dry periods but little harm appears to come to the tree. Pondcypress 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 without pruning and does not form double or multiple leaders as do many large trees.

The cultivar 'Prairie Sentinel' is narrower than the species.

Propagation is by seed.

Diseases

No diseases are serious.

Twig blight is caused by a weak pathogen and is usually present on dead or dying tissue. When the tree is stressed the fungus can kill branch tips. Dead tips can be pruned off. Do not let dead or diseased branches remain on the tree. Keep trees healthy with regular fertilization.