

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. 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: specimen; screen; hedge

Availability: not native to North America

Description

Height: 50 to 80 feet

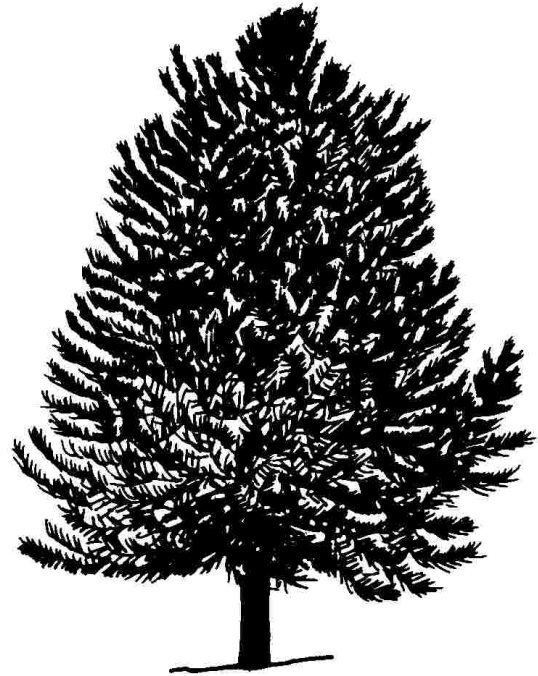


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Taxodium mucronatum*: Montezuma Baldcypress

Spread: 25 to 35 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: pyramidal, upright/erect

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

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Figure 2. Range

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: linear, lanceolate

Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen, semi-evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: unknown

Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round, oval, cone

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

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; showy; typically one trunk; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: green

Current year twig thickness: thin

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

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

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: unknown

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

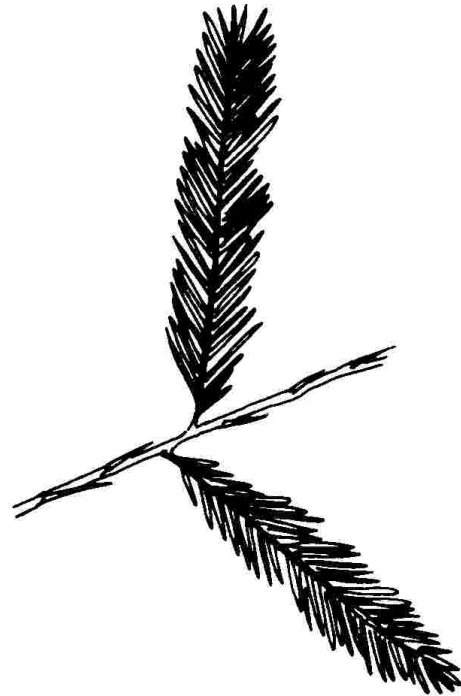


Figure 3. Foliage

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 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.