x Cupressocyparis leylandii: Leyland Cypress

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Introduction
A rapidly-growing evergreen when young, Leyland Cypress will easily grow three to four feet per year, even on poor soils, and will ultimately attain a majestic height of 50 feet or more in the west, perhaps somewhat shorter in the east. Leyland Cypress forms a dense, oval or pyramidal outline when left unpruned, but the graceful, slightly pendulous branches will tolerate severe trimming to create a formal hedge, screen or windbreak. The fine, feathery foliage is composed of soft, pointed leaves on flattened branchlets and are dark blue-green when mature, soft green when young. Leyland Cypress quickly outgrows its space in small landscapes and is too big for most residential landscapes unless it will be regularly trimmed. Although it can be sheared into a tall screen on small lots, Leyland Cypress should probably be saved for large-scale landscapes where it can be allowed to develop into its natural shape.

General Information
Scientific name: x Cupressocyparis leylandii
Pronunciation: x koo-press-so-SIP-air-iss lay-LAN-dee-eye
Common name(s): Leyland Cypress
Family: Cupressaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 6A through 10A (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Figure 1. Middle-aged x Cupressocyparis leylandii: Leyland Cypress
Credits: Ed Gilman

Figure 2. Range
Uses: specimen; screen; hedge; highway median; Christmas tree  
Availability: not native to North America

**Description**

Height: 35 to 50 feet  
Spread: 15 to 25 feet  
Crown uniformity: symmetrical  
Crown shape: oval, pyramidal, columnar  
Crown density: dense  
Growth rate: fast  
Texture: fine

**Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)  
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: entire  
Leaf shape: scale-like  
Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see  
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen  
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches  
Leaf color: green, blue or blue-green  
Fall color: no color change  
Fall characteristic: not showy

**Flower**

Flower color: no flowers  
Flower characteristics: no flowers

**Fruit**

Fruit shape: round  
Fruit length: less than .5 inch  
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 don't droop; not 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, partial sun or partial shade

**Soil tolerances**: sand; loam; clay; acidic; alkaline; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance**: high  
**Aerosol salt tolerance**: moderate

**Other**

Roots: not a problem  
Winter interest: no  
Outstanding tree: yes  
Ozone sensitivity: unknown  
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant  
Pest resistance: sensitive to pests/diseases

**Use and Management**

Leyland Cypress grows in full sun on a wide range of soils, from acid to alkaline, but looks its best on moderately fertile soil with sufficient moisture. It is surprisingly tolerant of severe pruning, recovering nicely from even severe topping (although this is not recommended), even when half the top is removed. It grows well in clay soil and tolerates poor drainage for a short period of time. It also is very tolerant of salt spray.

Some available cultivars include: `Castlewellan', a more compact form with gold-tipped leaves, excellent for hedges in cool climates; `Leighton Green', dense branching with dark green foliage, columnar form; `Haggerston Gray', loose branches, columnar-pyramidal, upturned at ends, sage-green color; `Naylor's Blue', blue-grey foliage, columnar form; `Silver Dust', wide-spreading form with blue-green foliage marked with white variegations.

Propagation is by cuttings from side growths.

**Pests**

Bagworm can defoliate a tree in a week or two, and can be quite serious.

**Diseases**

A canker affects the tree following drought; a foliage fungus occasionally infects foliage. This plant is not recommended for planting in California due to the severity of this canker disease. Perhaps the disease will stay in the western United States.