**Cedrus atlantica ‘Argentea’: Silver Atlas Cedar**

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

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**Introduction**

This silver-blue foliaged cultivar is a handsome evergreen for specimen planting where it will not be crowded since the tree looks its best when branches are left on the tree to the ground. This shows off the wonderful pyramidal form with lower branches spreading about half the height. It reaches 40 to 60 or more feet tall and 30 to 40 feet wide. The trunk stays fairly straight with lateral branches nearly horizontal. Allow plenty of room for these to spread. They are best located as a lawn specimen away from walks, streets, and sidewalks so branches will not have to be pruned. The trees are much too large for most residential properties. It looks odd if lower branches are removed. Older trees become flat-topped and are a beautiful sight to behold.

**General Information**

**Scientific name:** Cedrus atlantica  
**Pronunciation:** SEE-drus at-LAN-tih-kuh  
**Common name(s):** Silver atlas cedar  
**Family:** Pinaceae  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 6A through 8B (Fig. 2)  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Invasive potential:** little invasive potential  
**Uses:** specimen; bonsai  
**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

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Description

**Height:** 40 to 60 feet  
**Spread:** 35 to 50 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** irregular  
**Crown shape:** pyramidal  
**Crown density:** moderate  
**Growth rate:** moderate  
**Texture:** fine

Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** spiral (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** entire  
**Leaf shape:** needle-like (filiform)  
**Leaf venation:** parallel  
**Leaf type and persistence:** needled evergreen, evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches  
**Leaf color:** silver  
**Fall color:** no color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

Flower

**Flower color:** unknown  
**Flower characteristics:** not showy

Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval, cone  
**Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches  
**Fruit covering:** dry or hard  
**Fruit color:** brown  
**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; not showy; typically one trunk; thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** little required  
**Breakage:** resistant  
**Current year twig color:** green, brown  
**Current year twig thickness:** medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun, partial sun, or partial shade  
**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; slightly alkaline; acidic; 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:** free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

Difficult to transplant, it should be moved as a container plant or root-pruned balled-in-burlap. Soil preference is for well-drained deep loam, on the acid side, but it can tolerate sandy or clay soils, if they are well-drained. The tree looks its best when sheltered from strong winds but tolerates open conditions, and will grow in full sun or partial shade. Allow for plenty of soil space around the tree since growth will be poor in restricted soil space. Tolerates extensive drought only when grown in an area where roots can explore a large soil area. Performs well in all areas within its hardiness range. It is suitable in zone 9 in California and perhaps in Florida.

Cultivars: Two other especially desirable cultivars are *Cedrus atlantica* 'Pendula', a weeping form, and *Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca', having beautiful bluish-white foliage.

Pests

Generally free of insect pests and resistant to diseases, they may occasionally fall prey to tip blight, root rots or black scale and the Deodar weevil. Usually no pest protection or control is necessary.

Sap-suckers are attracted to the trunk and often riddle it with small holes. This usually does little lasting harm to the tree.