



# *Taxodium distichum* Baldcypress<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

Narrowly to broadly pyramidal when young, Baldcypress, the state tree of Louisiana, eventually develops into a broad-topped, spreading, open specimen when mature (Fig. 1). Capable of reaching 100 to 150 feet in height, most landscape specimens are rarely seen in this open form because they are usually much younger and shorter. Trees grow at a moderately fast rate, reaching 40 to 50 feet in about 15 to 25 years. Although it is native to wetlands along running streams, growth is often faster on moist, well-drained soil. The pale green, needle-like leaves turn a brilliant coppery red in fall before dropping, but the bare branches and reddish gray, peeling bark provide much landscape interest during the winter. The trunk grows unusually thick toward the base, even on young trees. The small seeds are used by some birds and squirrels.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Taxodium distichum*

**Pronunciation:** tack-SO-dee-um DISS-tick-um

**Common name(s):** Baldcypress

**Family:** *Taxodiaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5 through 10 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** hedge; 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); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; reclamation plant; screen; shade tree; small parking lot islands (<

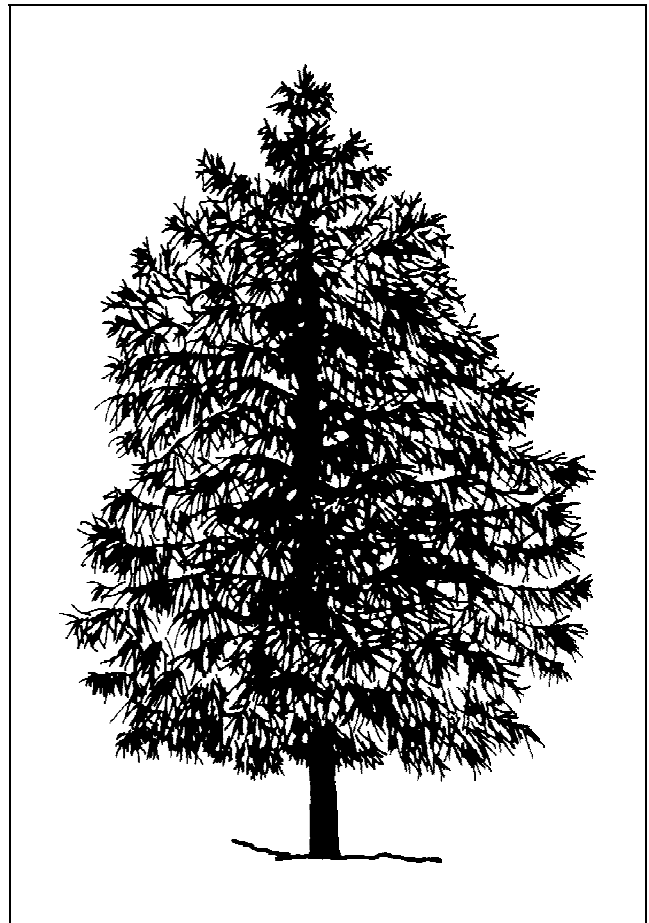


Figure 1. Middle-aged Baldcypress.

100 square feet in size); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree; tree has been successfully grown in urban areas where air pollution, poor drainage, compacted soil, and/or drought are common

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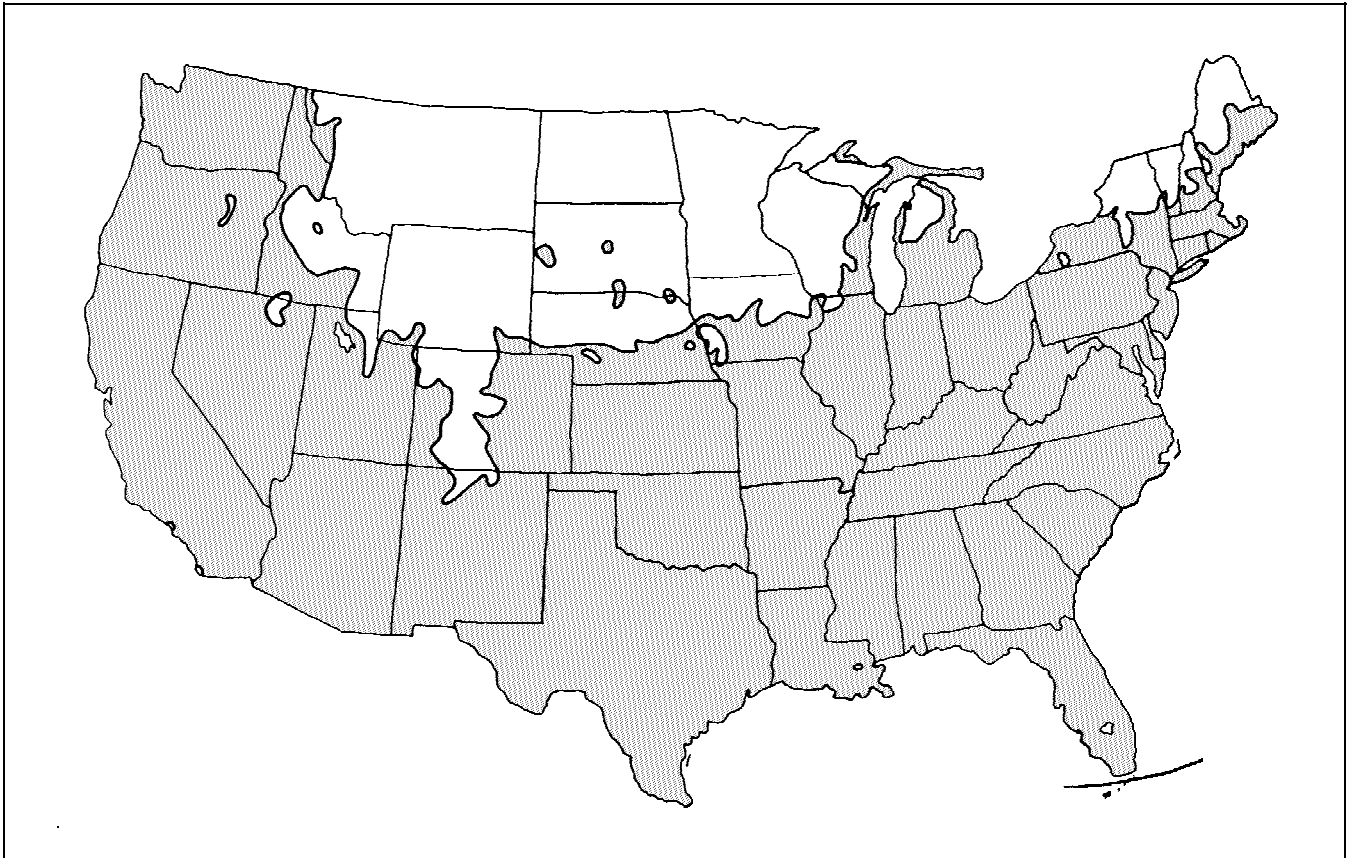


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

**Fall characteristic:** showy

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 60 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

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** fine

## Flower

**Flower color:** brown

**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; green

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

## 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:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** copper; yellow

## 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

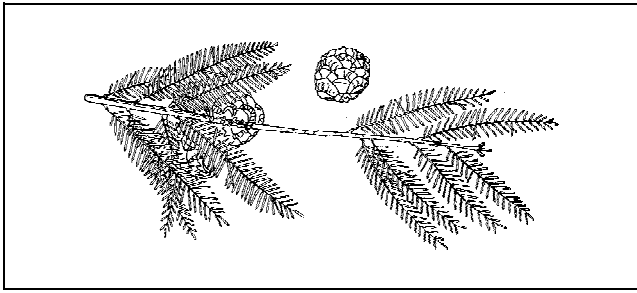


Figure 3. Foliage of Baldcypress.

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** thin

**Wood specific gravity:** 0.46

### Culture

**Light requirement:** 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

### 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

**Ozone sensitivity:** tolerant

**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, Baldcypress can also be grown in dry locations and makes an attractive lawn, street, or shade tree. Cypress knees do not generally form on these drier sites. Cities from Charlotte, NC, Dallas, TX to Tampa, FL currently use it as a street tree and it should be used more extensively throughout its range in urban landscapes. It provides a good vertical accent to the landscape and should be used more often in urban areas. Baldcypress can be clipped into a formal hedge, creating a wonderful soft screen.

Surprisingly, the roots do not appear to lift sidewalks and curbs as readily as some other species. Its delicate, feathery foliage affords light, dappled shade, and the heartwood of Baldcypress is quite resistant to rot. However, most lumber available at lumber yards today is sapwood and is not resistant to rot.

Baldcypress is ideal for wet locations, such as its native habitat of stream banks and mucky soils, but the trees will also grow remarkably well on almost any soil, including heavy, compacted, or poorly-drained muck, except alkaline soils with a pH above 7.5. Locate where the sun will strike the tree on all sides for best symmetrical development. 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 a moderately dense canopy and does not form double or multiple leaders as do many other large trees.

The cultivar 'Monarch of Illinois' has a very wide-spreading form and 'Shawnee Brave' has a narrow, pyramidal form, 15 to 20 feet wide. 'Pendens' has drooping branchlets and large cones. *Taxodium distichum* var. *nutans* (*Taxodium ascendens*) is native to wet, boggy areas with standing water, whereas *Taxodium distichum* is more common along streams.

Propagation is by seed.

### Pests

Bagworms can defoliate portions of the tree. Mites can be particularly troublesome in dry summers without irrigation, causing early leaf browning and defoliation in mid to late summer.

### Diseases

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.