

# V *Cupressocyparis leylandii* (A.B. Jackson & W. Dallimore) W. Dallimore & A.B. Jackson

## Leyland Cypress

**Family:** Cupressaceae.

**Cold Hardiness:** Most cultivars are cold hardy to USDA zones 6b through 10a and tend to experience significant twig damage in zone 6a.

**Foliage:** Evergreen; to 1/8" long; scale-like on most stems, but more awl-like on very vigorous twigs; acute tips; the medium green, dark green, to blue-green scale-like leaves are reminiscent of False Cypress (*Chamaecyparis*) or Arborvitae (*Platyclusus*) foliage.

**Flower:** Monoecious; not ornamentally important.

**Fruit:** Small globular eight-scaled knobby 1/2" diameter cones; may not be produced on young plants; green; glaucous; turning brown with age.

**Stem / Bark:** Stems — flattened twigs in a feather-like pattern; green turning brown; Buds — tiny; foliose or not really forming true buds per se; green; somewhat resinous if cut; Bark — gary brown to red-brown; exfoliating with age.

**Habit:** Leyland Cyresses are rapid growing narrow upright columnar evergreens potentially 40' or 50' (70' possible) tall, however, this species often does not reach that size in our region due to long-term pest and disease issues; the overall texture is medium to medium-fine.

**Cultural Requirements:** Well adapted to much of Texas, but it performs better in the eastern half of the state; plants need a moderately well drained site with a steady supply of moisture; avoid poorly drained soils as plants are prone to root rots and shallow rooting resulting in increased propensities for windthrow; soils can be acidic to slightly alkaline; full sun to partial shade; Leyland Cypress tolerates more shade than most *Juniperus spp.*; trees are moderately tolerant to salt exposure.

**Pathological Problems:** Recent problems with spider mites and bag worms have become limiting in a number of locales; twig blights and trunk cankers have also become troublesome.

**Ornamental Assets:** Leyland Cyresses grow quickly, have handsome dense evergreen foliage, and a nice narrow pyramidal to conical form.

**Limitations & Liabilities:** This species is often planted as a foundation shrub on the corner of buildings where it quickly overgrows the site; older trees may develop multiple leaders which tend to split under snow and ice loads; bagworms and cankers can be serious limitations.

**Landscape Utilization:** Although widely gaining in popularity as a large evergreen screen or hedge, it often overgrows smaller urban/suburban sites; this species may be overused at present, a "wait and see attitude" toward continued extensive use of this species might be best given the prevalence of recent disease problems; plant only where there is ample room for growth or with the knowledge of the need for regular pruning to maintain a preset size; plants are also used in warm climates as Christmas trees; Leyland Cypress is sometimes used along highway plantings and in coastal landscapes for its screening properties and salt tolerance.

**Other Comments:** The genus name is a hybrid of the two parental genera, *Cupressus* and *Chamaecyparis*, for this hybrid species; the specific epithet honors the Englishman C.J. Leyland who first grew these hybrids.

**Native Habitat:** This species began as a result of a chance seedling from an intergeneric cross between *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis* (D. Don) E. Spach (Alaskan Cedar) and *Cupressus macrocarpa* K.T. Hartweg (Monterey Cypress) that was found on an English estate, Leighton Hall, in the late 1800's.

**Related Taxa:** Since the original cross was made it has been intentionally repeated to select additional cultivars, primarily varying in foliage color.

***Chamaecyparis obtusa*** (P. Von Siebold & J. Zuccarini) S. Endlicher **Hinoki Falsecypress**  
(*Chamaecyparis coralliformis*, *Chamaecyparis formosana*,  
*Cupressus obtusa*, *Retinispora obtusa*, *Thuja obtusa*)

- C *Chamaecyparis obtusa* is also known as Hinoki Cypress or Japanese Falsecypress; the species type is a broadly conical tree with a potential height of 50N to 75N and spread of 10N to 20N but this species is often represented in the U.S. nursery trade by dwarf cultivars maturing as small as 4N tall; this long-lived species is slow growing, seldom outgrowing the site; the scale-like foliage is handsome sprays and mature trees develop peeling strip-like red-brown bark.
- C This species can be useful in mesic climates in USDA zones 5 to 7(8a); plants do not tolerate drying winds or low relative humidity and are short-lived in Texas, they should be reserved for use only in the coolest humid portions of our region; dwarf plants are mostly used for foundation plantings, hedges, containers, rock garden plantings, or as bonsai specimens; where adapted, the larger forms can be effective in buffer strips or as screens.
- C The genus name *Chamaecyparis* derives from the Greek words for dwarf (chamai) and cypress (kuparissos); the specific epithet refers to blunt or obtuse leaf tips.

***Chamaecyparis pisifera*** (P. Von Siebold & J. Zuccarini) S. Endlicher **Sawara Falsecypress**  
(*Chamaecyparis filifera*, *Cupressus pisifera*, *Retinispora pisifera*)

- C This species is also known as Japanese Falsecypress or Sawara Cypress; Sawara Falsecypress grows slowly to be a medium to large size broadly conical or pyramidal tree 50N to 70N tall and 10N to 25N wide, but it is usually less than 25N to 35N in our region; this species is mostly used as a shrub, accent, container plant or in rock gardens.
- C *Chamaecyparis pisifera* can be grown in mesic regions in USDA zones 5 to 7(8); plants are not tolerant of salt exposure and languish in hot climates; soils should be well drained and acidic to neutral in pH; plants tolerate some drought once established; bagworms and twig blights can be problematic; although not well adapted to most of our region, *Chamaecyparis pisifera* is probably the best of the *Chamaecyparis* for cooler portions of our region and tends to fair better than *C. obtusa* or *C. thyoides* in East Texas; the specific epithet means bearing peas, in reference to the small pea-sided cones.
- C 'Filifera' is a common cultivar with scale-like leaves on slender drooping twigs; 'Boulevard' is a shrub form with more juniper-like needles and a silver-blue foliage color.

***Chamaecyparis thyoides*** (L.) N.L. Britton, E.E. Sterns, & J.F. Poggenburg **White-Cedar**  
(*Chamaecyparis andelyensis*, *Chamaecyparis henryae*, *Cupressus thyoides*)

- C *Chamaecyparis thyoides* is also known as Atlantic White-Cedar, Southern White-Cedar, Swamp White-Cedar, White Cedar, or Whitecedar Falsecypress; this conical evergreen tree matures at 40N to 50N(75N) tall, but reaches this size very slowly; trees may not reach this size outside its native haunts; the specific epithet means like *Thuja*, in reference to the resemblance of the foliage to that of *Thuja occidentalis*.
- C Trees are native to the swampy wet sites in the Eastern U.S.; they perform best on moist acidic soils with sunny exposures; trees are adapted to humid portions of USDA zones 4 to 8(9a); plants are not well adapted to arid climates and it is best used as an upright evergreen screen or background plant only in humid environments; this species does not perform well in most of our region.

**References:** Dirr, 1998; Flint, 1997; Gilman, 1996; van Gelderen and van Hoey Smith, 1989; Whitcomb, 1983.

Copyright 2006 with all rights reserved by Michael A. Arnold; intended for future inclusion in *Landscape Plants For Texas And Environs, Third Edition*.