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Cypress, Leyland (spp.)

X Cupressocyparis leylandii

Leyland Cypress

Cupressaceae (Cypress)

Type Tree, woody plant

Hardy range 6A to 10A
Height 25' to 50' / 7.60m to 15.20m
Spread 15' to 25' / 4.60m to 7.60m
Growth rate Fast
Form Columnar, oval and pyramidal
Exposure Partial shade or partial sun to full sun
Persistence Evergreen

Native Habitat
Hybrid origin

Leaf Color Blue and green
Fall Color No change in fall color

Leaf Identification
Type: Simple
Arrangement: Opposite
Venations: None
Margins: Entire
Shapes: Scale-like
Length: Less than 2in./5cm

Fruit Color Brown

The fruit is dry and round.

Environment
This plant tolerates some drought and salt well.
This plant will grow in dry soil.
Suitable soil is well-drained/loamy, sandy or clay.
The pH preference is an acidic to alkaline (less than 6.8 to more than 7.7) soil.

Landscape Uses
- Seashore planting
- Border
- Screen
- Specimen

Attributes and Features
- Christmas tree
- No flowers or blooms

Crown, Branch and Twig
This plant is symmetrical with a fine texture and has a dense crown.
This plant's bark is not showy.
Branches or twigs are thin.

This plant typically grows with one trunk.
Little pruning is required.
This plant is very flammable.

Culture Notes
Leyland Cypress grows in full sun on a wide range of soils, from acid to alkaline, but looks its best and stays most healthy on moderately fertile soil with sufficient moisture near the coast. It is tolerant of pretty severe pruning. The plant appears to recover after the entire top half of the plant is removed. It grows well in clay soil and tolerates poor drainage for only a short period of time. It also is very tolerant of salt spray. Often used as a Christmas tree. Pollen can cause significant allergy.

It is short lived in many landscapes throughout the US due to a fungus canker disease. Some trees last just about 10-20 years in the eastern and western US, then branches begin to die from canker disease. Other plantings appear to do fine, at least for a while. Mature plants are susceptible to blowing over in strong winds due to a poor root system. Since this Leyland Cypress is so

susceptible to disease, consider substituting with the native eastern redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana* or *J. silicicola*), 'Hogan' western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*), incense-cedar, 'Green Giant' *Thuja*, or 'Nigra' or Techny' *Thuja occidentalis*.

Plants do not appear to have much of a root system. 'Irish Mint' is reported by Jim Berry to have a better root system.

Tree establishment specifications

Choose good quality trees for planting. The most common cause of young tree failure is planting too deep. In most instances, the point where the top-most root in the root ball originates from the trunk (referred to as the root flare zone or root collar) should be located just above the soil surface. You may have to dig into the root ball to find the root flare. If there is nursery soil over this area, scrape it off. Never place ANY soil over the root ball. The planting hole should be at least twice the width of the root ball, preferably wider because roots grow best in loose soil. In all but exceptional circumstances where the soil is very poor, extensive research clearly shows that there is no need to incorporate any amendments into the backfill soil. Simply use the loosened soil that came out of the planting hole. Simply planting with the topmost portion of the root ball slightly higher than the surrounding soil might still install the tree too deep - be sure to locate the root flare.

Weed suppression during establishment is essential. Apply a 3-inch thick layer of mulch to at least a six-foot diameter circle around the tree. This area should be at least two feet in diameter for each inch of tree trunk diameter and maintained during the establishment period. Apply a thinner layer of mulch directly over the root ball but keep it at least 10 inches from the trunk. This allows rainwater, irrigation and air to easily enter the root ball and keeps the trunk dry. Placing mulch against the trunk and applying too thick a layer above the root ball can kill the plant by oxygen starvation, death of bark, stem and root diseases, prevention of hardening off for winter, vole and other rodent damage to the trunk, keeping soil too wet, or repelling water.

Regular irrigation after planting encourages rapid root growth that is essential for tree establishment. Trees provided with regular irrigation through the first growing season after transplanting require about 3 months (hardiness zones 9-11), 6 months (hardiness zones 7-8), or one year or more (hardiness zones 2-6) per inch of trunk diameter to fully establish roots in the landscape soil. Trees in desert climates may take longer to establish. Trees that are under-irrigated during this establishment period (and most trees are) often require additional time to establish because roots grow more slowly. Be prepared to irrigate through the entire establishment period, especially during periods of drought.

Irrigation also helps maintain and encourage the desirable dominant leader in the tree canopy on large-maturing trees. Instead of a dominant leader, trees that are under-irrigated during the establishment period often develop undesirable, low, co-dominant stems and double leaders that can split from the tree later.

Unlike established plants, which do best with deep, infrequent irrigation, research clearly shows that recently transplanted trees and shrubs establish quickest with light, frequent irrigation. For trees planted in spring or summer, provide one (cooler hardiness zones) to three irrigations (warmer hardiness zones) each week during the first few months after planting. Daily irrigation in the warmest hardiness zones provides the quickest establishment. Following the initial few months of frequent irrigation, provide weekly irrigation until plants are fully established. With every irrigation, apply one (cool climates) to two (warm climates) gallons of water per inch trunk diameter (e.g. 2 to 4 gallons for a 2-inch tree) over the root ball only. In most landscapes that receive more than 30 inches of rain or irrigation annually, if the mulch area is maintained weed-free, irrigation does not need to be applied outside of the root ball. Never add water if the root ball is saturated.

In cooler hardiness zones, in all but the driest years, irrigation of spring- and summer-planted trees usually can be discontinued once fall color has begun. Irrigation of fall planted trees, however, should be continued until foliage has dropped from the deciduous trees in the region. In warmer climates, irrigate fall-and winter-planted trees as described for the spring- and summer-planted trees.

In drier, desert climates there is benefit to be gained from applying additional irrigation outside of the root ball area. This is best done by making a large diameter berm four to six inches high, then filling it with water so it percolates into the soil. For the first two years, irrigate twice each week through the spring, once per week in summer provided monsoons arrive, and twice each week again in fall if it remains warm. Taper off watering to once or twice each month in winter and resume twice weekly next spring. For years three to five, water twice per month in spring, summer, and fall and once or twice per month in winter. During years five through seven, water once every three weeks in warm weather and once every six weeks in winter. After this, the drought-tolerant desert trees should be able to survive on natural rainfall.

Trees with good, strong structure need no pruning at planting, except to remove broken twigs. Do not remove branches to compensate for root loss - research has shown that this can be detrimental to establishment.

Pests, Diseases and Damaging Agents

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

Diseases: *Seridium* canker and *Botrysphaeria* canker affect the tree, especially following drought. These can lead to plant death and are both a major cause of Leyland Cypress short life; a foliage fungus infects foliage. This plant is not recommended for planting in many areas due to the severity of the canker disease. Root rot occurs on soils kept too wet.