

Leyland Cypress

X Cupressocyparis leylandii

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Image 1. Leyland Cypress Christmas Tree



Image 2. Foliage of Leyland Cypress

Leyland cypress (*X Cupressocyparis leylandii*) is an intergeneric (of two separate genera) cross between Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) and Alaska Cedar (*Chamaecyparis nootkatensis*) that originated in England in 1888. Since that time, many cultivars have been selected that differ in coloration and growth habit for use in shelterbelts, hedges, landscape plantings, and Christmas tree production. Plants will tolerate a wide range of soil types from clay to sand, acid to alkaline. It grows well in full sun, but tolerates partial shade. Growth is best when moisture is adequate, but it is also drought tolerant and suitable for dry sites. Classified hardy to USDA Hardiness Zone 7 (average minimum winter temperature 0° to 10° F), Leyland cypress is relatively cold hardy and well suited to plantings throughout the southeast.

Recently, Leyland cypress has shown promise for Christmas tree production because of its fast growth, natural form and attractive foliage. The foliage is scale-like without the sharp needles common to Eastern redcedar and Arizona cypress. Foliage color varies by cultivar from bright green to gray, including a variegated cultivars with green foliage and white, yellow to gold branch tips. Most Christmas tree producers choose the Leighton Green cultivar for its dark green color and good growth form.

Many growers produce saleable trees in four year on quality sites, and there are few major diseases or insect pests that limit growth. Generally, Leyland cypress plantations yield a greater percentage of marketable trees than Virginia pine or Eastern redcedar plantations. Propagation is by rooted cuttings as the cross does not produce seed. Unlike most Christmas tree species, Leylands have no noticeable aroma.

References:

Lindstrom, O.M., D.J. Moorhead, and G.W. Kent. 1997. Propagation and care of Leyland cypress as Christmas trees. The Cooperative Extension service, The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. MP 350. Revised. 6 p.

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