

Leyland Cypress

Leyland cypress (x *Cupressocyparis leylandii*) is a large, handsome evergreen that is used extensively in the Southeast. It is a favorite because it is fast growing. It is adapted to all of South Carolina.



Leyland cypress screening a parking lot.
Karen Russ, ©2007 HGIC, Clemson Extension

Mature Height/Spread

This tree will grow 60 to 70 feet tall and 12 to 20 feet wide. Heights of 70 to 100 feet are not uncommon.

Growth Rate

It grows rapidly when young (3 to 4 feet per year).

Ornamental Features

The Leyland cypress forms a graceful pyramid, with dense pendulous branches and fine, feathery foliage. This foliage, on flattened branchlets, is dark green or blue-green and is small and scale-like. The fruit (cone) is small and brown, and creates no litter problems.

Landscape Use

This is a fast-growing evergreen when young and will quickly outgrow its space in small landscapes. It is an excellent choice for quick screens, hedges and groupings, especially on large properties. This tree tolerates severe trimming, and can be restrained at an early age with pruning. Although Leyland cypress can be sheared into a tall screen on small lots, it is most effective when allowed to develop into its natural shape. Regular trimming is necessary to retain a formal hedge, screen or windbreak. When considering this tree for use in a design, be mindful of its projected height. It usually grows larger than most people desire. It is a good background plant, and contrasts well with broadleaf evergreens.

This tree prefers sun to part shade and well-drained fertile soil. It is very adaptable, however, and tolerates acidic or alkaline soils and poor drainage on occasion. It withstands salt spray and is suited for coastal landscapes. Prune only during dry periods to help prevent disease.

Problems

The most serious problem is a canker that causes branch dieback to the main trunk, and can seriously disfigure or kill the tree. To help prevent spread of this fungus, spray with a fungicide, and prune only during dry periods. Bagworms can also be a major insect problem on this tree. For further information on problems on Leyland cypress, refer to the fact sheet [HGIC 2004, *Leyland Cypress Diseases & Insect Pests*](#).

Cultivars

- 'Castlewellan'- This is a somewhat compact form. It has gold-tipped foliage, which is more pronounced in fall, winter and spring.
- 'Leighton Green'- This tree is tall and columnar, with dense branching and dark green foliage.
- 'Haggerston Gray' - This tree has irregular lateral branches with sage green foliage.
- 'Naylor's Blue' - This columnar form is more loosely branched and open than most. The foliage is blue-gray. It may be slower growing.
- 'Silver Dust' - This wide-spreading form has blue-green foliage marked with variegation.
- 'Greenspire' - This narrow, columnar form has very dense, rich green foliage.

Note: Chemical control of diseases and insects on large trees is usually not feasible since adequate coverage of the foliage with a pesticide cannot be achieved.

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