**Taxodium mucronatum**
**Montezuma Baldcypress**

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

---

**INTRODUCTION**

Montezuma Baldcypress, Mexico’s national tree, is a huge tree in its native habitat and is pyramidal when young with a dense crown but, like Baldcypress, eventually develops into a broad-topped, spreading, open specimen when mature with pendulous branches (Fig. 1). Capable of reaching 100 to 150 feet in height, most landscape specimens will reach this height. The pale green, needle-like leaves are only deciduous in the colder sections of its range, remaining evergreen elsewhere. The trunk grows unusually thick toward the base, even on young trees. One of the most vivid examples of this trait is the Tule Cypress found growing in Oaxaca, Mexico, which sports a trunk diameter of 35 to 40 feet, or a circumference of 115 feet, while the tree itself is only 140 feet tall. This tree has been estimated to be between 2,000 and 5,000 years old.

---

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Scientific name:** *Taxodium mucronatum*

**Pronunciation:** tack-SO-dee-um mew-kroe-NAY-tum

**Common name(s):** Montezuma Baldcypress, Mexican-Cypress

**Family:** Taxodiaceae

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** hedge; screen; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

---

**DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 50 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

---

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-623, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1994.

2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.
Growth rate: medium
Texture: fine

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: evergreen; semievergreen
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower
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
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

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
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: green
Current year twig thickness: thin
Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

It provides a good vertical accent to the landscape and could be tried in urban areas. The roots probably will not lift sidewalks and curbs as readily as some other species since Baldcypress does not. Its delicate, feathery foliage affords light, dappled shade, and the heartwood of Montezuma Baldcypress is quite strong and resistant to rot.

Although not truly a swamp tree as other Taxodiums, Montezuma Baldcypress still grows well in moist soil. Its seeds will only germinate in either water or wet soil. Montezuma 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 does not form double or multiple leaders as do many other large trees. In the only test that I am aware of in the East, growth was stunted in Auburn University test plots where no irrigation was provided. Since extensive testing of this tree is lacking in the east, plant only a few of them to evaluate adaptability in your area.

Propagation is by seed.

Diseases

Probably no diseases are serious.