



Chamaecyparis lawsoniana Lawson Falsecypress¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

INTRODUCTION

Often seen at 40 to 60 feet tall by 15 feet wide in its cultivated form, this North American native can soar to heights of 100 to 150 feet in the wild (Fig. 1). The massive, thick trunk and formal, upright, conical silhouette is softened by the gently weeping tips of the short, upright branches. The flattened, dark blue-green branchlets have a delicate, almost fern-like appearance, which are nicely complemented by the rough, deeply furrowed, reddish-brown bark. Available in a wide variety of forms and bluish foliage colors, Lawson Falsecypress still remains today an important timber trees from the Pacific Northwest. But it is rare in the nursery trade and probably not well adapted to most landscapes.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*

Pronunciation: kam-eh-SIP-uh-riss

law-so-nee-AY-nuh

Common name(s): Lawson Falsecypress,
Port-Orford-Cedar

Family: *Cupressaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 7 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: Bonsai; screen; specimen

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

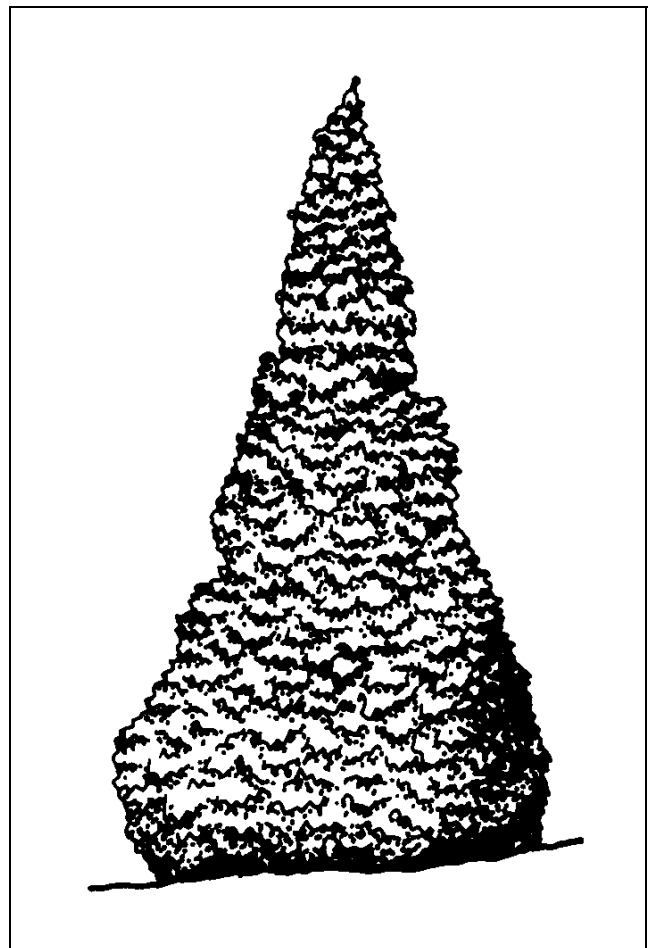


Figure 1. Mature Lawson Falsecypress.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 40 to 60 feet

Spread: 15 to 25 feet

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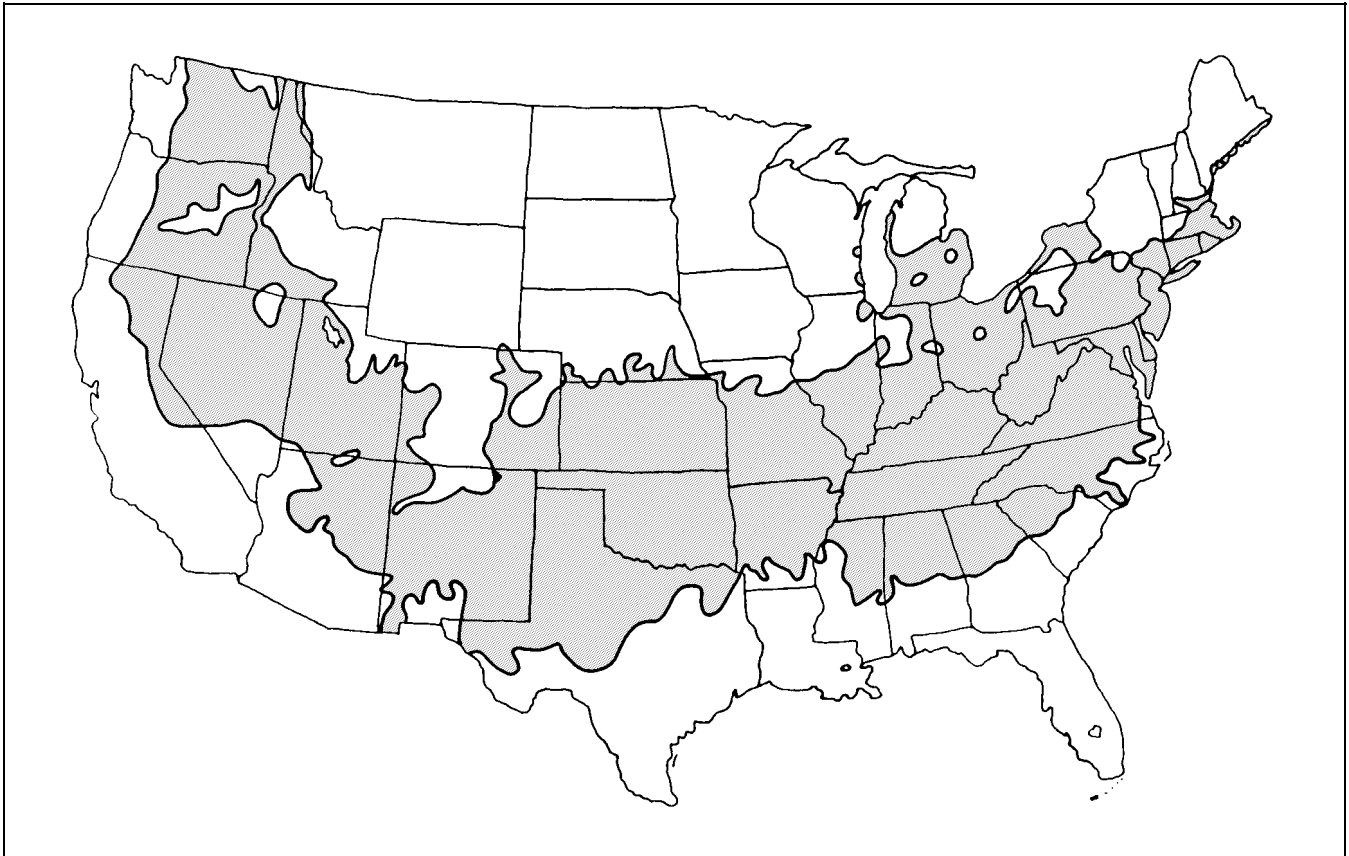


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: columnar; pyramidal; upright

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: medium

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: scale-like

Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: blue or blue-green; green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: blue; red

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: < .5 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: grow mostly upright and will not droop; 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: brown; green

Current year twig thickness: thin

Wood specific gravity: 0.43

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

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

Diseases

A fungus damages this species by causing root-rot which eventually kills the tree. Plant only in the most well-drained soil.

There is also a branch canker which can cause branch dieback.

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Lawson Falsecypress is only suited for the largest landscapes such as in parks, golf courses, large industrial or commercial landscapes or estates. The unusually blue foliage and dense, symmetrical growth habit make it ideally suited as a screen in a sunny spot protected from constant wind. It has somewhat picky cultural requirements and should be grown in full sun in moist, well-drained soil (not clay), in areas of moderate to high humidity, and preferably where the trees can be protected from harsh winds. These sites may be hard to find in the East.

Various cultivars are available with different foliage colors (golden, blue, or silver-variegated) and different growth forms (dwarf, columnar, and low-spreading).

Propagation is done easily by cuttings taken in fall, or by seeds, with difficulty.

Pests

No pests are of major concern.