

Cryptomeria japonica – Japanese Cedar

Cryptomeria japonica, commonly known as Japanese Cedar, is a forest tree native to Japan and southern China. It is a tall, cone-shaped evergreen with bluish green foliage and a massive trunk with thick reddish brown bark that shreds and peels in long strips.

This is a fast-growing tree (up to 7m in 10 years) that, in its native habitat, can get more than 50m tall with a trunk diameter exceeding 3m. Ornamental specimens are rarely more than 20m tall though, and many of the named selections stay much smaller. The branches are arranged in horizontal tiers, ascending at first, then drooping near their ends. The flattened, wedge-shaped leaves are about 1.3cm long and point forward, while their bases clasp the twigs. The leaves are overlapping and crowded in 5 ranks that spiral around and completely cloak the twigs. Male and female cones, 2.5cm or less in length, are on the same tree.

More than 200 ornamental cultivars have been named.

Site in full sun to partial shade and needs well-drained soil but plenty of water for best growth. Never allow the soil to dry out and mist if the humidity stays very low. This is a very hardy frost tolerant tree.

Stately Japanese cedar makes an imposing specimen or use them in a group to create a visual screen or windbreak. Japanese Cedars, symmetrical and uniform, are often planted along avenues.

It is also highly prized for bonsai.

Propagation

Pre-soak stored seed for 24 hours and then stratify (refrigerate) for 2 - 4 months at 1 - 8°C. To stratify place the seed in clean wet sand and either place in a plastic bag in the refrigerator or, if desired, you can sow in sand in a propagating tray, bag the tray and place the whole thing in the refrigerator. Some seed may well germinate during stratification.

Once stratification has been done:-

Sow in a peaty propagation mix kept moist but not wet, sow seed at a depth of 4 to 5mm, and place the seed tray in a warm shaded position.

It can be slow to germinate. The seed can be harvested 'green' (when it has fully developed but before it has dried and produced any germination inhibitors) and sown

immediately. It should germinate in late winter. If the seed is harvested too soon it will produce very weak plants or no plants at all.

When large enough to handle, prick the seedlings out into individual pots and grow them on for at least one year before planting out in their permanent positions.

