

Cunninghamia lanceolata – Chinafir

Cunninghamia lanceolata commonly known as Chinafir is a large tree, growing from 9 – 22m in height with a spread of 3 - 9m. It reaches an even greater size where growing in the wild.

The shape is generally pyramidal but the branches droop somewhat, leaf needles are arranged in a flattened spiral around the stem with a pleasant upward arch. The overall appearance is quite exotic and beautiful. Flowers are small and inconspicuous - the cones are small and scaly, and usually form in groups of three or more. Older specimens usually look ragged, since the old needles cling to stems for up to 5 years. Chinafirs tend to be multi-stemmed and always sucker up around the base.

Chinafir presents unique shape and appearance in the landscape. This tree is fast growing, frost and drought tolerant and able to succeed on light sandy soils. The Chinafir can quickly add "bulk" to a new landscape and provide a handsome background for flowering trees and shrubs. It is at its best in part shade to full sun in evenly moist, acid, well-drained soil, but does well in damp heavy soil with some protection from strong winds.

Propagation

Pre-treatment – Four weeks cold stratification can improve germination rates.

Sow late winter in a cold frame and only just cover the seed.

The seed usually germinates in 1 - 2 months at 20°C.

The seedlings are very subject to damping off so should be watered with care and kept well-ventilated.

When they are large enough to handle, prick the seedlings out into individual pots and grow them on in a sheltered position for at least their first winter. Plant them out into their permanent positions in late spring or early summer after the last expected frosts. The seed can store for several years.