UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

ENH-789

Thuja plicata 'Canadian Gold': 'Canadian Gold' Giant Arborvitae[1]

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Introduction

A native western North American tree, giant cedar can reach 180 to 200 feet in height in some areas of the Northwest but is more often seen at 50 to 70 feet in height with a spread of 30 to 40 feet. Forming a broad pyramidal silhouette with strongly horizontal branches, giant cedar is an evergreen with fragrant, bright golden, delicate needles which generously clothe the branches, casting dense shade beneath the tree. The insignificant yellow flowers are followed by small, half-inch cones which seem a little out-of-place on such a large tree.

General Information

Scientific name: *Thuja plicata*
Pronunciation: THOO-yuh ply-KAY-tuh
Common name(s): 'Canadian Gold' giant arborvitae, 'Canadian Gold' western redcedar
Family: *Cupressaceae*
USDA hardiness zones: 6A through 8A (Fig. 2)
Origin: native to North America
Invasive potential: little invasive potential
Uses: hedge; screen; specimen; highway median
Availability: not native to North America

Description

Height: 50 to 70 feet
Spread: 30 to 40 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical
Crown shape: pyramidal, columnar
Crown density: dense
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: fine

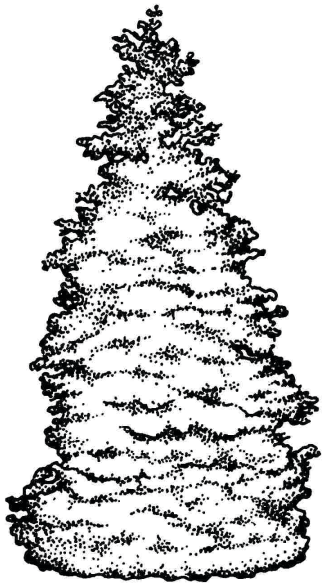

Figure 1. Mature *Thuja plicata* 'Canadian Gold': 'Canadian Gold' Giant Arborvitae

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: unknown (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire

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Leaf shape: scale-like, ovate
Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen, fragrant
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: yellow
Fall color: no color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Figure 2. Range

Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: yellow
Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: cone, elongated
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; very showy; typically one trunk; thorns
Pruning requirement: little required
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: green, brown
Current year twig thickness: thin
Wood specific gravity: 0.32

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun, or partial shade, shade tolerant
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; alkaline; well-drained; occasionally wet
Drought tolerance: moderate
Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: not a problem
Winter interest: no
Outstanding tree: yes
Ozone sensitivity: unknown
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant
Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

Tolerating shearing quite well, giant cedar is ideal for use as a hedge or screen, or a specimen for a large landscape. The wood of this tree is commercially used in North America for the manufacture of roof shingles and siding and the split trunks were often used by Indians for making totem poles or canoes. Due to its narrow crown, it works well close to buildings where soil is frequently alkaline and drainage is poor.

Giant cedar naturally occurs on river banks, swamps, and even bogs so should be grown in full sun or partial shade on moist, well-drained, fertile soil, and prefers a moist atmosphere. Apparently pH adaptable, growth is stunted on dry soils. Provide irrigation during the summer or locate in an area with moist soil and growth should be rapid.

A few of the other cultivars include: 'Atrovirens', excellent shining green foliage; and 'Fastigiata' ('Hogan'), dense columnar silhouette, very resistant to bagworms - they do not appear to infest this cultivar as much as the species.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern but may be occasionally bothered by bagworm.