



Dawn redwood

Metasequoia glyptostroboides

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The beautiful dawn redwood is a living fossil, and is only one of three extant redwood species known in the world. The genus *Metasequoia* was originally only known from fossil species, until it was recognized in 1944 that a very small area in the Sichuan-Hubei region of China harbored this species. It is unknown how large this tree may grow. Specimens with trunk diameters (dbh, or diameter at breast height) exceeding eight feet have been known, and heights of over 150 feet are known. Estimates are that this tree can reach 200 feet, and may attain several hundred years of age, possibly more. This tree is known to reach 100 feet within fifty years in the United States. Older trees will often develop buttresses on their lower trunk. The general form is pyramidal. It prefers full sun and is hardy through zone 5.



Many people confuse this tree with the similar baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*). There is usually more red in the bark of the dawn redwood; dawn redwood has depressions in the trunk under branches, which baldcypress does not; branchlets are usually opposite on the twig, those of baldcypress being alternate; and the needles are blunt on the end, while those of bald-cypress are pointed. Both species are deciduous, losing needles and even branchlets in the fall.

Cultivation

This is a tree that loves wet soils and which will withstand saturated soils. It also grows well in moderate moisture such as that found in most places in the eastern United States, but does not tolerate drought well, at least not until well established. This species seems to be remarkably free of pests and disease. While deer will readily eat the similar baldcypress, they will not touch the dawn redwood. This tree does need room.

Photo credits: Foliage: John Knouse; Autumn tree: Wouter Hagens



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