

Tree Profile - *Chamaecyparis* (False or Hinoki Cypress)

General Information: *Chamaecyparis* is a genus of conifers in the cypress family Cupressaceae, native to eastern Asia and western and eastern North America. In the nursery trade it is often incorrectly known as "false cypress" for lack of other common name. They are medium - sized to large evergreen trees growing from 20 - 70 m tall. It has dark green foliage, and attractive, shredding, reddish-brown bark which peels off in long narrow strips.

Lighting: Full sun to semi shade is the preferred location. Without proper lighting, lower and inner branches brown and die, which is a serious problem, because *Chamaecyparis* will not bud back on old wood! Keep out of strong drying winds, they can cause foliage die-back.

Watering: Can be touchy, some varieties are very vulnerable to root rot. However, unlike most genera that like it dry, false-cypresses tend to drink a lot of water, especially when in an active growth phase. Never let them dry out completely. The best strategy is to use very fast-draining soil, water moderately, allow it to dry somewhat between waterings, and supplement watering with frequent misting.

Feeding: Every two weeks, from early spring to mid autumn. *Chamaecyparis* doesn't like lime; an extra tip is to water occasionally with 2 teaspoons/9 ltr Epsom salts. This will provide added magnesium which gives the foliage an intense blue.

Pruning and wiring: The major styling challenge for false cypress is the fatal combination of die-back from lack of light, rapid growth and refusal to bud on old wood. If *Chamaecyparis* isn't pruned constantly, inside and lower branches will die and never grow back, making bonsai maintenance a headache. The tree is best shaped through constant pinching of new foliage - never use scissors to prune as foliage browns where cut. Most false cypresses are easy to wire, but branches may take a while to set and may need to be re-wired several times to avoid cutting in to the tree. Can be wired at any time of year, but as wiring seems to sap the vigor of the plant, it is best to wait three months after repotting to wire.

Propagation: Cuttings can be taken from young wood in July or August. Hinoki cypress cuttings will root readily. Can be grown from seed, but needs cold pre-treatment and may take up to a year to germinate. Veneer grafting can be used on Hinoki cypress in summer.

Repotting: Every two to four years in early to mid spring for young trees, every three to five years for older ones. Your soil mix will depend on your conditions: fast-draining is the best idea for most people. Hinoki cypress roots easily, and may need to be repotted every second year, removing as much as 1/3 to 1/2 of the root.

Pests and diseases: Juniper scale can be controlled by applying pesticides when the crawlers are active. The bagworm webs dead foliage and other debris together to make a nest. Blight can be a problem on young plants in nurseries or old plants in landscape situations. In young plants, branch tips turn brown and die back until the whole branch or young tree is killed. Trees over five years old are less susceptible. When older trees in landscapes are affected by tip blight, entire trees are seldom killed. Tip blight can infect trees during wet weather. Scorch may look like a disease but is caused by excessive direct sun, freezing stress, drought or mites. Scorch may look like a disease but is caused by excessive direct sun, freezing stress, drought or mites.

Some species suitable for bonsai:

- *C. lawsoniana*, reddish brown bark and bright green foliage with purplish brown cones.
- *C. obtusa*, reddish brown bark and dark green, fanlike foliage, which turns reddish in the winter.
- *C. pisifera*, Sawara cypress - has reddish-brown bark and pointy foliage like young junipers
- *C. thyoides*, Andelyensis Conica cypress - white cedar with a dense cone of blue-green foliage.



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