

Tree Profile: Coast Redwood - *Sequoia sempervirens*

General Information: The Coast Redwood is native to the west coast USA, particularly the California and southern Oregon coastlines. (Coast Redwood may be referred to as Coastal or Californian Redwood too). The tallest tree in the world is generally recognized to be a Coast Redwood named 'Hyperion', at 115.6m tall. Some other famous old specimens in California are also more than 100m tall with a trunk diameter at the base of more than 7m. Sequoia's make excellent bonsai as they readily back-bud and have vigorous growth, which makes them more appropriate for larger size bonsai as their strong growth can be hard to control. The Coast Redwood is an evergreen conifer with fern-like leaves and small round seed cones.

Other redwoods include the evergreen Giant Redwood *Sequoiadendron giganteum* and the deciduous Dawn Redwood *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*. The Dawn Redwood is often seen in bonsai form, but the Giant Redwood not so much as it is more difficult to shape because of its brittle wood.

Lighting: Sequoias like a sunny position year round.

Temperature: It has been reported that mid-summer sun can brown the leaf edges and that semi-shade should be considered at this time of the year, but this doesn't seem to be a significant problem in Melbourne provided that sufficient water is kept up to the tree. Frost tenderness has also been reported, but again this problem does not seem significant under Melbourne conditions.

Watering: During the summer, redwoods need a lot of water and the soil should never be permitted to dry out completely. Conversely in winter, be wary of overwatering as root rot may occur. A free draining soil mix is essential. Of the two – it is suggested that too wet is better than too dry – member's trees have been lost to even the briefest period of dry. Drooping, sad looking new growth is a sign that your tree is too dry and water is needed immediately.

It is noted that some growers are treating their Sempervirens much like Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) or Swamp Paperbark (*Melaleuca ericifolia*) – quite happy to immerse pots in water (half way up the depth of the pot) through the growing seasons of Spring through to Autumn.

Feeding: Fertilise with a general purpose fertiliser primarily in spring and autumn. Summer fertilising may promote over-vigorous growth so be wary. An occasional feeding over winter may be applied, as growth never completely stops on evergreen species.

Pruning and Wiring: Coast redwoods are normally styled in formal or informal upright form, to mimic their natural growth habits. Back-budding is profuse especially near pruning scars, on the trunk and branches. Rub off unwanted buds as soon as they appear. Wire branches into position when young, as they tend to be brittle after aging. Guy wires are often a better solution to lower branches. Do major pruning at the start of spring, and then pinch the tips of leaves as they extend. With luck, buds will form at the pinched end of the leaves (as well as profusely back along the branch!) Thin out excess growth throughout the growing season. Light autumn pruning is also fine as these trees grow through winter, albeit with less vigour than spring and summer.

Propagation: Can be propagated from seed or cuttings. Air layering is also possible.

Repotting: Repot during early spring or autumn. The strongly growing roots fill up the pot quickly, so repotting may be required at one or two yearly intervals – monitor ease of water drainage or if the tree is seen to be raised in the pot, to guide repotting needs. Heavy root pruning is acceptable.

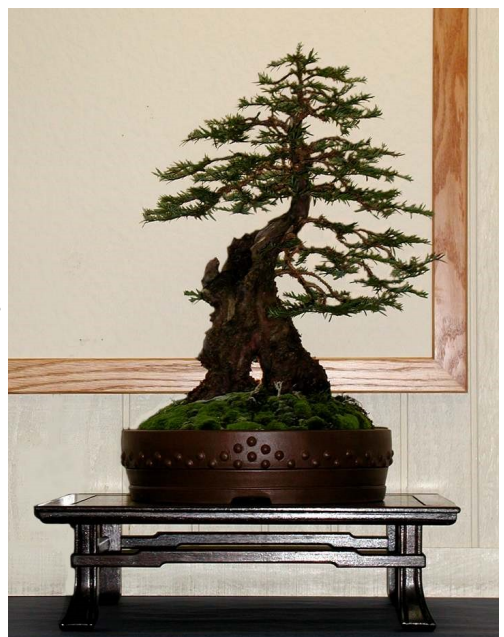
Pests and Diseases: They do not seem to be prone to pests and diseases, however vigilance is always required – some caterpillars are not fussy with food sources!

Species Suitable for Bonsai: The *Sequoia sempervirens* is a single species, however some cultivars are available. For example, a relatively new variety of Californian Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens* 'Red Chief') is much slower growing than the parent plant but well suited to bonsai.

The suitability of other cultivars for bonsai cultivation is unknown.



Above - Photo courtesy of Wikipedia



Right - Sequoia foliage