

**General information:** There are trees 800 to 1000 years old in the Cache River basin in Illinois. Bald cypress has been found in the same area.

The bald cypress prefers very wet, swampy soils. Riverbanks, lake floodplains, wet depressions. They often grow in dense stands.

The leaves of the bald cypress are tiny needles, grown in 2 rows along slender greenish twigs:

It is deciduous, although the dried, brown leaves often cling to the tree well into the winter.

A close relative is **Pond Cypress (*T. ascendans*)**. Similar to Baldcypress in that the trunk is perfectly straight for many feet. The leaves turn brown in fall before dropping but the bare branches and light brown, ridged bark provide much landscape interest.

**Family:** *Taxodiaceae*

**Lighting:** Full sun.

**Temperature:** Zone 5B through 9. The range of the bald cypress includes southern Delaware to south Florida, and west to the Rocky Mountains.

**Watering:** Watering must be done daily, year round, in the south. The pots may be kept submerged almost to the top of the soil.

**Feeding:** Use a fertilizer that is well balanced such as Peters 10-10-10 at near full strength. Weekly in spring and summer.

**Pruning and wiring:** The bald cypress lends itself to formal upright, informal upright, slanting, literati, twin-trunk styles.

In nature, a mature bald cypress growing in the open will have a long, limbless trunk, capped with a cluster of horizontal branches.

The formal upright probably should take this shape. A younger tree in nature will have limbs growing lower on the trunk.

In far south Florida, Everglades cypress (most of them "pond cypress") are shorter, and more scraggly; the literati style is more common.

Groups of more than 5 or 7 trees might want to emulate the cypress dome habitat that is so natural to them in the south.

That's not a good representation, but the idea is a rounded dome rising out of a flat horizon. The trees along the coast are shorter.

These trees are fast growing, and wires will damage the bark if they are not watched closely. Alternatively branch ties can be used.

Shape the foliage by pinching back new growth. Let a branch grow for a season if you want to thicken it, then cut it back.

Developing cypress "knees." There's still considerable debate over what these knees are "for" in nature, but they are all intents a knee. These should thicken and develop well over subsequent years.

**Propagation:** Cuttings or air layer are easiest.

**Repotting:** Potting and root pruning should be done in spring, just as little green nubs are showing up on the bare trunk.

A heavy soil is best such as a compact mushroom compost. If the tree is not kept in water, a heavy soil is a must.

Since bald cypress' preferred habitat is low, swampy terrain, flat shallow, earth-colored pots are recommended

**Pests and diseaes: Pests:** None of significance.

**Diseases:** Twig blight is caused by a weak pathogen and is usually present on dead or dying tissue. When the

**Bibliography:**

*Bonsai Today*, No. 33, Sept.-Oct. 1994, pp. 51-56 The tree pictured on p. 56 is not a typical growth style for bald  
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