

## ARIZONA CYPRESS

### *Cupressus arizonica* Greene

plant symbol = CUAR

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program



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#### Uses

**Livestock:** This tree can be harvested, processed, and used for fence posts because it is quite durable when seasoned.

**Timber:** Arizona cypress has little value when grown for timber but has been used for Christmas trees and for some hobby and craft items.

**Erosion control:** This tree has been used for windbreaks in desert areas.

#### Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

#### Description

*Cupressus arizonica* Greene, Arizona cypress, is the only cypress native to the southwest. It is a medium sized tree 50 to 60 feet tall and 15 to 30 inches in diameter. It is evergreen, with a dense, upright, cone-shaped crown and smooth reddish-brown bark that sometimes becomes fibrous with flat ridges. Leaves are scale-like and grayish-green, bluish-green, or silvery, arranged opposite in pairs and tightly clasping the cord-like or four-sided twigs; they emit a fetid odor when crushed. The cones are 3/4 to 1 inch in diameter, somewhat round, dark reddish brown, with 6 to 8 shield-shaped woody scales. The cones mature in autumn of the second season but persist on the tree for many years.

#### Adaptation and Distribution

It is found naturally on dry, sterile, rocky mountain slopes and canyon walls, but does very well when planted on better soils or when irrigated. It requires a minimum of 10 to 12 inches of water annually. It is not recommended for elevations of over 3,000 feet nor is it recommended for soils with a high water table. It requires full sunlight for best development, but is subject to sunscald when grown as an ornamental. Though it grows slowly under natural dry conditions, it is a rapid grower (up to 3 feet per year) on better soils with a good moisture regime.

Arizona cypress is distributed throughout the Southwest. For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

#### Establishment

Arizona cypress is usually available as 1 year old potted stock. It should be planted in areas where there is at least 10 to 12 inches of water available annually either naturally or through irrigation. Early spring is the best time for planting. For windbreaks 6-foot spacing in rows is recommended. Open sunlight is required for best growth.

#### Management

Arizona cypress generally requires little maintenance. Deep watering at least every other week is necessary for desert planting during the growing season. Arizona cypress is especially susceptible to fire and needs proper protection.

#### Pests and Potential Problems

Arizona cypress ordinarily has few disease pests, but when grown in areas of high humidity, incidence of disease increases. Principal enemies are mistletoes

and rusts. The cypress bark beetle may be troublesome by mining twigs on ornamentals.

**Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)**

No cultivars are known, but Arizona cypress plants are available from most commercial conifer nurseries in the west.

**Prepared By & Species Coordinator:**  
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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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