

Thuja occidentalis

American Arborvitae, Northern Whitecedar



Tried and True

Native Plant Selections

for the Mid-Atlantic

This native tree of northeastern and north central North America* can be very long-lived; along the cliffs of the Niagara Escarpment in Canada, specimens could be over 1,000 years old. The common name, which means “tree of life,” refers to the medicinal properties of the bark and foliage, which cured scurvy.



Tree	Hedge, Foliage
Height: 20–60 feet	
Spread: 10–15 feet	
Bloom Color: Red-brown	
Characteristics	
Single- or multi-trunked evergreen tree with columnar or conical shape	
Opposite , scale -like, dark green needles, paler below, in flat branchlets look bronze in winter	
Male & female cones (strobili) occur on separate branchlet tips; ovoid seed cones mature to red-brown releasing seeds in fall; may persist into winter	
Red-brown exfoliating bark on mature tree	
Attributes	
Tolerates clay , wet soil, air pollution, Black Walnut	
No serious pests or diseases; deer frequently severely damage, especially in winter browsing twigs and branchlets (may need protection)	
Slow growing but can be very long-lived	
Ethnobotanic uses, but may be harmful if eaten	
Provides food & cover for birds & small mammals	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
Soil Requirements : Well-drained, neutral to alkaline	<i>Cupresses x leylandii</i> - Leyland Cypress
Light Requirements : Sun, Partial Shade	<i>Juniperus chinensis</i> - Chinese Juniper
Water Requirements : Moist, Wet	<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i> - European Buckthorn
Keep roots in cool, moist soil; likes light pm shade	<i>Rhamnus frangula</i> - Glossy (or Shining) Buckthorn
Protect from strong wind, snow, and ice damage; select single- stemmed specimens as multiple trunks may split apart from heavy snow/ice	<i>Taxus cuspidata</i> - Japanese Yew
Use as specimen, hedge, or in rain gardens (>150 sq ft)	*In the Mid-Atlantic Region, it is not native to DC or DE. It occurs sporadically in some of MD's northwestern counties and in PA. In VA, it is infrequent in the mountains and is found in only one site in the Piedmont. It is not reported in NoVA.
Hardiness : USDA Zones 3a–7b	
developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria	

Images by Elaine Mills, Arlington, VA