

Cupressaceae



Cupressaceae, the cypress family (order Pinales), 30 genera with 133 species of evergreen ornamental and timber shrubs and trees, distributed throughout the world. The leaves of these plants are opposite or whorled and usually paired or in threes. Adult leaves are narrow, scalelike, and pressed against the branchlets, which themselves are often flattened. Awllike juvenile and transitional leaves are often present on mature trees. The male reproductive structures are borne at the ends of short twigs; the female structures (cones) are terminal, with opposite or whorled scales, consisting of both a fused bract (modified leaf) and a scale. The cones, usually woody, have erect ovules.

Formerly, 9 genera and about 16 species were treated as a separate family, Taxodiaceae, by most botanists. However, molecular studies have shown that these, along with the traditional Cupressaceae, form a single natural group.

Economically important genera include alerce (*Fitzroya*), white alerce (*Pilgerodendron*), arborvitae (*Thuja*), [Chilean cedar](#) (*Austrocedrus*), cypress (*Cupressus*), [cypress pine](#) (*Callitris* and *Widdringtonia*), arartree (*Tetraclinis*), [false arborvitae](#) (*Thujopsis*), [false cypress](#) (*Chamaecyparis*), [incense cedar](#) (*Calocedrus*), oriental arborvitae (*Thuja* or *Biota*), juniper (*Juniperus*), [Tasmanian cedar](#) (*Athrotaxis*), [Japanese cedar](#) (*Cryptomeria*), [China fir](#) (*Cunninghamia*), [big tree](#) (*Sequoiadendron*), redwood (*Sequoia*), [dawn redwood](#) (*Metasequoia*), and bald cypress (*Taxodium*).

Many members of the cypress family are important as timber sources or ornamentals, especially arborvitae, cypress, bald cypress, and juniper. They also contain useful oils, resins, and tannins.