

Cupressus lusitanica

Cupressaceae



Mexico, Guatemala

Am: *Yeferenji-tid*

Eng: *Mexican cypress*

Ecology

The Mexican cypress originates from the moist mountain forests of Mexico and Central America. After the eucalypts it is one of the commonest plantation trees in Ethiopia. It grows best in Dry, Moist, and Wet Weyna Dega and Dega agroclimatic zones. The tree is only moderately drought resistant and requires deep moist soils.

Cypress aphid in Ethiopia

Uses

Firewood, timber (furniture, construction), poles, posts, shade, ornamental, windbreak, live fence.

Description

A large evergreen conifer to 35 m with a straight trunk, generally conical but not regular in shape, branches wide spreading. The branchlets grow in many planes and branches hang down. BARK: Red-brown with vertical grooves, grey with age.

LEAVES: Dull blue-green, in 4 ranks, with spreading pointed tips. CONES: Male cones like fat tips on branchlets, produce clouds of yellow pollen; female cones round, 1.5 cm across, waxy-grey colour when young. Cones ripen in 2 years becoming brown, scales open to release many winged seeds. Scales have a central thin “peg”.

Propagation

Seedlings.

Seed

Germination rate about 30-45% in 10-20 days. 160,000–290,000 seed per kg. The right time for collection is when the cones start to turn brown. After collection the cones are dried in the sun until they open. The seeds can then be separated from the cones by shaking on a sieve. Sow in a seedbed and prick out in pots.

Treatment: Not necessary.

Storage: Seed can be stored for some months but the viability is gradually reduced.

Management

Fast-growing on good sites, moderate on poorer sites. Weeding during early establishment. Pruning and thinning of trees in woodlots managed for timber production, trimming if grown as a live fence.

Remarks

Cypress can produce poles after 10 years and general-purpose timber in as little as 20 years. The tree is susceptible to *Monochaetia unicornis* (canker) pathogen and *Oemida gabani* woodborer. From Ethiopia and Kenya and south to Malawi, cypress plantations have been badly affected by a cypress aphid and many thousands of trees have died in recent years.

