



One in a series.....

Taxodium distichum

Taxodium distichum (bald cypress) is a deciduous conifer in the family Cupressaceae. It is native to the southeastern United States. Hardy and tough, this tree adapts to a wide range of soil types, whether wet, dry, or swampy. It is noted for the russet-red fall color of its lacy needles.

This plant has some cultivated varieties and is often used in groupings in public spaces. Common names include bald cypress, baldcypress, swamp cypress, white cypress, tidewater red cypress, gulf cypress and red cypress. (Wikipedia)



BRANCH DETAIL

Bald Cypress or botanically *Taxodium distichum* is one of my most favorite trees. The first time I can recall seeing one was at Joe T. Garcia's, a popular Mexican restaurant in Fort Worth, Texas. We sat out on this immense patio area with eight or ten very large Bald Cypress trees above us casting a mesmerizing light shade onto the tables as Mexican music loudly played. Imagine an outdoor cantina with twinkly lights strung up into its quite lofty branches. Not sure what I was seeing when I stood up to feel their soft texture. Upon returning my hand to my nose, I could smell its distinctive pine scent... it was a conifer! Later at a bonsai conference I purchased two of them with the fantasy of making them into miniature trees. Bonsai is actually a time consuming and tedious maintenance of plants who would much rather not be trapped in an ultra small container. Common sense then dictated that I forgo that pleasure and so I planted them in my backyard. The following summer one appeared struggling and then quite quickly turned crispy critters. Following a trail of murky water I determined that my wife had just recently started using Clorox on her dog runs to help clean them out. This now left me with only one that had luckily been planted on higher ground. Her tainted water had also wiped out a new bed of asparagus... needless to say, firm instructions followed quickly on not using it again. The other tree luckily grew into a magnificent thirty foot plus tree providing a wonderful amount of cooling light shade for quite a distance around that pyramidal conifer.

I just loved its soft narrow leaves ... so delicate and feathery.

Fast forward to where I currently live and so I naturally decided that when I purchased a house I'd plant another Bald Cypress. I knew of a business near Albuquerque called **Trees That Please** that somewhat specialized in these unique trees. What I also had in mind along with this somewhat standard *Taxodium*, was a tree the owner had written about that he'd discovered growing in southern New Mexico... *Taxodium mucronatum* or Montezuma Cypress. This is a tree that is rare even in very southern Texas and then normally found further down into Mexico.

So, I left with the intent of possibly also acquiring one of these unique trees he'd found. A quick call to confirm they were available was discouraging because I was advised that none were for sale. I drove the four hours over anyway to see what I could purchase. Once at his business I'd managed to find three other trees besides the Bald Cypress and snooping around I found a greenhouse with a **KEEP OUT** sign. For most plant geeks, this is actually an open invitation to enter. Immediately on my right was about a hundred or so one gallon containers with what looked like one year old seedlings... as luck would have it they were all labeled that illusive and rare tree... *Taxodium mucronatum* or Montezuma Cypress that I so desperately wanted to acquire. Approaching the nursery manager about these plants she indicated they weren't for sale but, I reminded her that I had plans to buy almost four hundred dollars worth of plants and that five or ten of those one gallon plants wouldn't hardly make a dent in his inventory. She tried but couldn't reach her boss... so she reluctantly said yes, I could buy ten. I was more than a happy plant person. I planted out five and sent the rest to a friend of mine in Texas.



BALD CYPRESS, DAY 1



YESTERDAY, FIFTEEN FEET

Back to current time. Needless to say you can see the substantial growth of the Bald Cypress above. Seems to have no issues with its drier conditions and the temperature. I was however very concerned about planting the Montezuma Cypress, that unique first cousin of the Bald Cypress because it's considered a Zone 8 tree and this is on the border between Zone 6 and 7. Of the five trees, only one didn't come back that first year. After this last winter hit -5, I was certain that those others were also gone but... they've all emerged this spring seeminly no worse than the previous winter. Let's then all say a loud **Amen and Hallelujah!**





Now about seven feet tall, the Montezuma Cypress may well indeed survive here (fingers crossed).