



## CONES - NOT FROM THE USUAL SUSPECTS

Can you identify conifers from their offspring? Or, at least, recognize a pinecone from a fircone or a sprucecone? Often a contractor will want to see our spruce and, after being shown CBS, Serbian, Norway, et al., they say 'No, not these – you know, the ones with the soft needles.' (Lord, give me strength!!!) Sometimes guys and gals, we need to work on the basics, or care a little more. Some of you actually took classes in this. Maybe we should have burned a few less couches, drank a few less beers, and attended class – hmmm!

Let's start out with a couple easy ones:



If you're doing okay so far, try a few harder varieties:



Now, we leave Plant Identification 101 and jump to a 500 level. The following are some of the more unlikely conifers (cone-bearing plants) that we sell at CPC. These differ from other conifers (which we usually associate with evergreen) in that they are deciduous.

...continued next page



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## CONES - CONTINUED

The first two are of the Yew family (Taxodiaceae):



Baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*) – a conifer usually associated with the South, but grows well in extreme Northern ranges as well; slow-growing; bright green needles turn to gold, arranged spirally around their stems similarly to the logarithmic spirals of their offspring cones; native and 'Shawnee Brave' are stocked.

Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostoboides*; 'sort of like a sequoia with overlapping scales') – a long-believed ancient relic rediscovered and redistributed over the globe since World War II; needles also bright green, arranged in flattened rows, turning to reddish-brown before they descend; phenomenally fast growth; species stocked with an occasional appearance of 'Gold Rush'.



Our third deciduous conifer makes only a rare appearance at CPC:



Larch: European, Japanese, or American (*Larix decidua*, *kaempferi*, *laricina*) – their needle arrangements vary off of spurs with soft green, somewhat glaucous tones; fast-growing, upright with a few variants such as 'Pendula' and 'Varied Directions'; often asked for, but a special order item at CPC

Last is the most unusual but most troublesome of our deciduous conifers:

The Maidenhair Tree (*Ginkgo biloba*) – fan-shaped, dichotomous (forked in two pairs) leaves (Don't feel bad – I had to look up that word, too!); slow-growing, but establishes well in almost any type of soil; fruit is actually a plum-shaped naked seed which gives off an offensive odor so plant the boys: 'Magyar', 'Princeton Sentry', 'Saratoga', 'Fastigiata', to name a few.

Dramatically, the Ginkgo releases its fans of bright yellow in the fall almost simultaneously – get out the lawn chairs and popcorn!

But no ginkgocones – why the conifer claim? Go figure, the male flowers are clusters of small cones.

So, I hope you did well! After all, it's evergreen season – Oops! I mean conifer season!



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