

# Baldcypress: *Taxodium distichum*



**B**aldcypress is a large tree reaching over 100 ft. in height with a diameter of 10 ft. Relatives of the Giant Sequoia, some Baldcypress are as old as 1,500 years. It is deciduous, losing the leaves in the winter months, hence the name “bald.” Most Baldcypress grow on flat ground, in alluvial soils and mainly along riparian (riverside) wetlands normally subject to periodic flooding by silt-rich “brownwater” rivers. Mature Baldcypress tolerate minor salinity, but do not reproduce in saline coastal waters.

Baldcypress growing in swamps have a peculiarity of growth called cypress knees. These woody projections above the ground or water are part of the root system. Their function is that of structural support and stabilization. Baldcypress growing on flood-prone sites tend to form buttressed bases, and together with a strong, intertwined root system, the trees are often able to resist very strong winds; even hurricanes rarely overturn them.

Baldcypress was designated the official state tree of Louisiana 1963, and is considered by some to be a symbol of the southern swamps. Baldcypress are valued for their water-resistant and beautiful, easily workable wood. The Manchac area was logged of most of its abundant cypress trees by the 1950s, turning the area from swamp (a wetland dominated by trees) to marsh (a wetland dominated by grass).

