

Eastern White Cedar



COOL FACTS:

Scientific name:	<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>
Average height:	12-15 meters
Type:	Evergreens
Did you know?	White Cedar is Latin for "tree of life", due to the supposed medicinal properties of the sap, bark and twigs.

BARK/LEAVES

The bark of the young Eastern White Cedar is thin and reddish brown. On a young tree it is smooth. On a mature tree it greys in colour, forms narrow flat ridges and shreds into thin strips that hang off the tree. The leaves of the Eastern White Cedar are flat, tiny, yellowish green and dull. They measure about 4-5 mm in length.

CONES /SEEDS

They produce tiny cones that grow in clusters. The seeds ripen and disperse in early autumn but the cones may stay on the branches for several months. With its dense evergreen foliage and cone shape, the Eastern White Cedar is beautiful for landscaping and is a popular choice for hedges and windbreaks.

HABITAT

The Eastern White Cedar grows best in moist, well-drained soil over limestone bedrock where the water is not too acidic. White Cedar is also one of the best tree species for protecting soil from erosion and for stabilizing stream banks and lake shores. It is considered one of the most decay-resistant trees in North America.

The Eastern White Cedar is Ontario's most valuable tree for wildlife habitat. It provides shelter and food for deer and many species of birds. Small mammals like snowshoe hares, porcupines and red squirrels also rely on white cedar for food and shelter.

It is often used for posts, cedar-strip canoes, shingles and other structures that are exposed to water or soil. The oil from its leaf is distilled from boughs and used in medicines and perfumes. Boughs are also used in floral arrangements and it is a widely planted ornamental.

THREATS

Arborvitae leafminer is a small insect that feeds on the inside of the leaves and causes the foliage of the cedar to become gradually discoloured, going from pale yellow to brown, and then the shoots die as a result of larval mining. Severe attacks over several consecutive years cause twig death and, occasionally, stem death. Infested trees are usually able to renew their foliage later during the growth season.

Root rot, most commonly armillaria root rot, is frequently found in both red and white cedar trees. There is no cure and the disease is lethal to the tree. Root rot can be detected by the observation of white fungus, which spreads under the bark. This fungal mycelium is most commonly found towards the base of the tree or in the roots. The fungus will travel through the roots to neighbouring trees and will eventually kill all affected trees.

MORE COOL FACTS:

The essential oil within the plant has been used for cleansers, disinfectants, hair preparations, insecticides, liniment, room sprays and soft soaps.

There are some reports that the Ojibwa made a soup from the inner bark of the soft twigs. Others have used the twigs to make teas to relieve constipation and headache.