

*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*

[Synonyms : *Chamaecyparis boursieri*, *Cupressus lawsoniana*]

**LAWSON'S CYPRESS** is an evergreen tree. Native to the north-western United States it has tiny red-brown cones.

It is also known as *Ädelcypress* (Swedish), *Ædelcypres* (Danish), *Camaiciparis* (Portuguese), Cedar, *Cipreste do Oregão* (Portuguese), *Cyprès de Lawson* (French), *Cypřišek Lawsonův* (Czech), *Cyprušteň Lawsonov* (Slovak), Ginger pine, Lawson cedar, Lawson chamaecyparis, Lawson cypress, *Lawsoninsyressi* (Finnish), Lawson's false-cypress, *Lawsons Scheinzypresse* (German), Matchwood, Oregon cedar, Oregon cypress, Pencil cedar, Port-Orford, Port Orford cedar, Port Orford white cedar, Spruce gum, White cedar, and White cypress.

The appearance of Lawson's cypress can be confused with that of Western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) but the aroma of either's foliage (that of the latter is aromatic and pineapplish) is distinctive.

Warning – prolonged intake of the aroma of the wood's oil may promote kidney problems and working with the fresh wood may cause allergic breathing problems.

*Lawsoniana* commemorates an Edinburgh nurseryman, Charles Lawson (1794-1873) who was manager of Peter Lawson & Son. In 1854, according to some authorities, Charles Lawson received seeds of the tree from Oregon and with these the Edinburgh nursery was the first to cultivate Lawson's cypress in Britain. Other authorities comment, however, that the seeds were collected in that same year in California by a William Murray whose brother, they claim, named the botanical species.

According to records the North American Karok Indian tribe of California used the branches to make brooms. They also used the hard, durable wood for construction, as well as the panelling, stools and headrests they used in their saunas. Some tribes also used it to make arrow shafts.

In the past this strong and lightweight wood was chosen for the 'separators' between the metal plates immersed in the acid in storage batteries. The wood was also used for boatbuilding, bridges, pit props, railway sleepers and general construction, as well as for matches, interior finishing and mothproof lining for cupboards and boxes. Even in the 1960s the fragrant, light yellow to whitish wood was still preferred for the slats of Venetian blinds. Today this wood is used commercially for house interiors (including flooring), and for boats, fencing, railway sleepers, matches etc.

It would seem that in parts of Wales at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the presence of two small trees in the garden were considered to be a symbol of peace and prosperity for the household.

In some urban areas in Ireland Lawon's cypress has been used as a substitute for palm at Christian Palm Sunday church services.