

Cryptomeria japonica

[Synonyms : *Cupressus japonica*]

JAPANESE RED CEDAR is an evergreen tree. Native to central China and to Japan, it has small dark brown cones.

It is also known as *Awasugi* (Japanese), Cedar, *Criptoméria* (Portuguese), *Cryptomeria*, *Cryptoméria du Japon* (French), *Cyprès du Japon* (French), Fir, Japanese cedar, *Japanische Cryptomerie* (German), *Japanische Sichelanne* (German), *Japansk Cypress* (Danish), *Kryptomeria* (Swedish), *Kryptomerie japonská* (Czech), Peacock pine, *Sichelanne* (German), and *Sugi* (Japanese).

The seeds are dispersed by the wind.

It has been confused with giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) but the latter has shorter and straight leaves.

Japonica means 'of or from Japan'.

Japanese red cedar has long been the principal source of timber in Japan. Old wood is buried and seasoned in the ground. This turns it a dark green colour that is then known as *Jindai-sugi* and is much admired and particularly sought after. Apart from any other qualities the wood's durability has recommended it as one of most often found in the construction of both Shinto and Buddhist temples. This soft and lightweight, fragrant, reddish brown wood has also been burnt as fuel and used for making furniture.

In some eastern countries the leaves or twigs are burnt as incense.

Japanese red cedar is believed to have been introduced to Sri Lanka in the mid-1870s.

In Victorian England in the mid-to late 19th Century the tree became quite a fashionable ornament in gardens.

Today this wood is used commercially as timber for housing, shipbuilding, general construction eg. bridges, furniture and boxes and crates.