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Pilgerodendron uviferum

[Synonyms : *Juniperus uvifera*, *Libocedrus tetragona*, *Libocedrus uvifera*, *Thuja tetragona*]

LAHUAN ALERCE is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native from southern Chile and south-western Argentina to Tierra del Fuego it has scale-like green leaves and small cones.

It is also known as *Ciprés de las Guaytecas* (French), and Pilgerodendron.

The flowers are pollinated by the wind.

This plant is threatened with extinction in the wild and has been a protected species under Appendix I of CITES since at least 1993. This means that only limited trade for scientific or conservation purposes is sanctioned. Governments are also required to obtain appropriate export and import licences.

Uviferum is derived from Latin *uva* (bunch of grapes) and *-fer* (bearing, carrying) components meaning ‘bearing grapes’.

At the turn of the 20th and 21st Centuries a Toronto-based international mining and metals company has been proposing to build an aluminium plant (part of a project which also includes three hydroelectric dams) in a sparsely populated area that is home to this threatened species as well as many other endangered animals and plants in the same region. This project has been challenged by a coalition of local communities and environmentalists. These opposing bodies believe that the envisaged flooded land and pollution from the aluminium production does not comply with existing Chilean environmental law, that little or no account has been taken of environmental considerations – and they identify in detail more suitable and less contentious sites, ones which would enable the projected plant to be more efficiently and less controversially powered.

Lahuan alerce has been cultivated as an ornamental.

The highly durable brownish wood has long been prized in Chile. It has been used for housebuilding, boats, poles and flooring, as well as for making furniture, doors and window sashes.