

Japanese Cryptomeria, *Cryptomeria japonica*

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Summary

Foliage: Short awl-shape needles; evergreen

Height: About 60 feet

Spread: About 25 feet

Shape: Conical to narrow conical

Main Features

Japanese cryptomeria is a handsome medium to large conifer with a conical to narrow conical form. This species is fast growing and is relatively popular in the trade. If lower limbs are removed, one can observe a beautiful orange-brown bark (on most trees). The foliage tends to turn brownish on the south side of the plant in winter due to desiccation; however, foliage will turn green in spring. Japanese cryptomeria does have a few disease problems, although these are not considered a major issue at this point in time. Reports of a branch dieback disease incidence in the southeast U.S., some leading to tree death, have been surfacing in the last several years; at present, there are no definitive diagnoses. Some cultivars are less hardy than the species. 'Elegans' is a beautiful dwarf cultivar with long (juvenile) awl-like needles that turn a purplish-brown in the winter; however, this cultivar has been especially disease-prone in southwestern Virginia.

Plant Needs

Zone: (5) 6 to 8

Light: Full sun

Moisture: Average; somewhat drought tolerant

Soil type: Average

pH range: Acid

Functions

Japanese cryptomeria is certainly worthy of specimen status (featured alone due to sufficiently attractive attributes). Because it is a relatively fast-growing conifer, it makes an attractive border species if there is enough room to accommodate its large size.

Care

There are no special care recommendations for this species except to irrigate in periods of drought.

Additional Information

There are numerous cultivars of Japanese cryptomeria that vary in form (dwarf, narrow, and compact) and foliage types (variegated, spiraled, and long-needed). An especially attractive Japanese cryptomeria planting lines the entranceway of the National Arboretum bonsai collection (Washington DC).