PLANT FACT SHEET

# *Thuja plicata* Donn ex D. Don

**GENUS** *Thuja* **FAMILY** Cupressaceae

**COMMON NAMES** Western Red Cedar, Giant Thuya, Western Arborvitae

## EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

**Edible parts:** bark

The inner bark is edible. In spring it is eaten fresh or can be dried and ground into a powder.
The wood is used during cooking to impart a flavour to fish.
Caution: It should only be eaten in small amounts.

## DESCRIPTION

A very large evergreen tree. It grows 22-60 m tall and spreads 6-9 m wide. It has a conical shape. The trunk tapers rapidly and is buttressed at the base. At higher altitudes it becomes a small tree. The bark is light reddish brown and peels and flakes off. The main branches spread and droop but turn upwards at the ends. The branches can extend to the ground and cover the trunk. The leaves are bright green with a white cross on the underside. The leaves are flat and make up many small scale like sections. They have a pineapple smell when crushed. The twigs are leaf covered and are feather like. The seed cone is oval and 12-18 mm long. There are 8-10 scales with a small sharp point at the tip.

## HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. In Canada it grows from sea level to 2000 m altitude. It grows in wetter places. It does best on moist alluvial sites. It is frost hardy. It suits hardiness zones 5-10. In Hobart Botanical gardens. Arboretum Tasmania.

## PRODUCTION

### Cultivation

Plants can be grown by seed or from cuttings. It can be grown by layering.

### Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees can live to 800 years old.

## NOTES

The leaves are used in medicine. There are 6 species of Thuja.

## PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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