BURNCOOSE NURSERIES PART OF THE CAERHAYS ESTATE

Taxodium distichum - Growing Guide

Growing Taxodium Distichum

Swamp cypress

These are deciduous conifers found in swampy forest conditions or near rivers in Northern and Central America. The leaves are arranged in two opposite ranks on short deciduous branchlets. The shoots are of two types: deciduous (without buds) which fall in the autumn and persistent (with buds) from which only the leaves fall.

These trees are very late to come into leaf and are grown in part for their spectacular autumn colours. These are a yellow-bronze turning to rust brown eventually. Female and male stroboli are borne on the same tree. The female cones are green at first and heavily scaled ripening to brown (1¼in long). The pendant male ones are red and expand in the winter.

At Caerhays we have several trees growing along river banks where they have achieved, in maturity, a height of 60-70ft. They have become a bit ragged with age as the branches are brittle and can split off the tree in a windy autumn before the leaves have dropped. At Tregrehan Garden near St Austell they grow a clump of T. distichum actually in a shallow pond where the trunks are submerged in water for part of the year. These trees (like Metasequoia glyptostroboides) can grow peculiar knee-like growths which project above the ground from the roots. The Caerhays trees exhibit the same fibrous, reddish brown bark but they do not have ‘knees’.

More recently we have managed to establish plants of T. distichum var. imbricatum ‘Nutans’ and T. distichum ‘Cascade Falls’. The former has spreading branches and erect branchlets with light green leaves and rich brown autumn foliage. The latter develops a cascading habit with strongly weeping branches. Our tree grows on a bank above a path and needs strong staking to keep it upright as it seems to want to develop a prostrate habit.

T. distichum var. imbricatum ‘Nutans’

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T. distichum 'Falling Waters'



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T. distichum 'Hursley Park'



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