

Saxegothea - Growing Guide

Growing Saxegothea Conspicua

Prince Albert's Yew

This is another genus of just one species. A monoecious evergreen conifer from the forests of Chile and Argentina closely related to podocarpus. In the wild it grows alongside *Nothofagus dombeyi* and *Fitzroya cupressoides*. It was first introduced into the UK by William Lobb and was named by Lindley (RHS Lindley Library) in honour of Prince Albert, the consort of Queen Victoria.

Saxegothea conspicua has the appearance of a small leaved yew but with drooping branches and branchlets. The author first saw a mature tree at Kilmacurragh Gardens in Ireland but soon realised that there was a better specimen growing just down the road from Burncoose at Tregulow Gardens near Scorrier. Here this slow growing tree is 40-50ft tall with a spread of 30-40ft. It is now a record tree in its own right and proved amenable to growing from ripe new growth cuttings collected in the early autumn.

S. conspicua has unusual new growth which, in young plants growing in full sun, emerges with a purple hue before turning light green. In the shade the light green new growth contrasts well with the dark green older foliage. Each leaf has two silvery cross bands on its undersides.

Male cones are cylindrical, and borne at the bases of the shoots. Female cones are fleshy and spherical 1.5in across and develop from terminal clusters at the end of the new growth.

At Tregulow this tree grows in dappled shade in a sunken glade near a stream. At Caerhays and Burncoose we are growing *saxegothea* in full sun but with some shelter from the strongest winds. Ten year old young plants are exhibiting an upright habit with a central leader and are growing

well albeit fairly slowly as you might expect from a yew-like tree. As yet they show no sign of the spreading habit which the Tregulow tree has in maturity.



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