

Sequoia sempervirens - Growing Guide

Growing Sequoia Sempervirens

Coastal redwood, California redwood

These are very tall, fast growing, columnar, evergreen conifers from coastal forests in Oregon and California. The coastal redwood has the distinction of being the world's tallest living tree measuring 350ft in height in the Redwood National Park. The average age of these giant trees in the US is 5-700 years although some have lived for nearly 2,000. The tallest tree in the UK is currently at Bodnant Garden in Wales where it measures around 150ft.

The genus is named after Sequoia (1770-1843) of Georgia who was half Cherokee and invented the Cherokee alphabet.

Sequoia is a genus of only one species; sempervirens. The tree has soft thick red-brown bark and yew-like foliage. It thrives in areas with cool damp summers and therefore grows most quickly on the west coasts of England, Scotland and Ireland. It will tolerate extreme wind conditions and pollution. Unusually for any conifer it will coppice and reshoot from the base when felled.

At Burncoose we planted the supposedly prostrate growing S. sempervirens 'Prostrata' on the drive 35 years ago. After a few years it decided not to be prostrate and put up a single leading shoot. This is today a 35ft tall tree although it is supposed to only grow to about 5ft. We have given up offering this prostrate form on our website as a result.

S. sempervirens produces male and female cones on the same tree when mature. The 1in female cones are cylindrical and ripen in their first year. The male cones are tiny.

The tree is most easily propagated from softwood cuttings or semi-ripe cuttings in late summer but, for a successful outcome, take cutting material only from young immature trees.



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