



Cupressus sempervirens

Cupressus sempervirens, the Mediterranean cypress (also known as Italian cypress, Tuscan cypress, Persian cypress, or pencil pine), is a species of cypress native to the eastern Mediterranean region, in northeast Libya, southern Albania, southern coastal Croatia (Dalmatia), southern Montenegro, southern Greece, southern Turkey, Cyprus, northern Egypt, western Syria, Lebanon, Malta, Italy, Israel, western Jordan, and also a disjunct population in Iran.

C. sempervirens is a medium-sized coniferous evergreen tree to 35 m (115 ft) tall, with a conic crown with level branches and variably loosely hanging branchlets. It is very long-lived, with some trees reported to be over 1,000 years old.

The foliage grows in dense sprays, dark green in colour. The leaves are scale-like, and produced on rounded (not flattened) shoots. The seed cones are ovoid or oblong, 25–40 mm long, with 10–14 scales, green at first, maturing brown about 20–24 months after pollination. The male cones release pollen in late winter. It is moderately susceptible to cypress canker, caused by the fungus *Seiridium cardinale*, and can suffer extensive dieback where this disease is common. The species name *sempervirens* comes from the Latin for 'evergreen'.

Uses

Mediterranean Cypress has been widely cultivated as an ornamental tree for millennia away from its native range, mainly throughout the whole Mediterranean region, and in other areas with similar hot, dry summers and mild, rainy winters, including California, southwest South Africa and southern Australia. It can also be grown successfully in areas with cooler, moister summers, such as the British Isles, New Zealand and the Pacific Northwest (coastal Oregon, Washington and British Columbia). It is also planted in Florida and parts of the coastal southern United States as an ornamental tree. In some areas, particularly the United States, it is known as "Italian" or "Tuscan cypress".

The vast majority of the trees in cultivation are selected cultivars with a fastigiate crown, with erect branches forming a narrow to very narrow crown often less than a tenth as wide as the tree is tall. The dark green "exclamation mark" shape of these trees is a highly characteristic signature of Mediterranean town and village landscapes. Formerly, the species was sometimes separated into two varieties, the wild *C. sempervirens* var. *sempervirens* (syn. var. *horizontalis*), and the fastigiate *C. s.* var. *pyramidalis* (syn. var. *fastigiata*, var. *stricta*), but the latter is now only distinguished as a Cultivar Group, with no botanical significance.

It is also known for its very durable, scented wood, used most famously for the doors of St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican City, Rome. Cypress used to be used in distilleries as staves to hold mash ferments to make alcohol before the invention of stainless steel. Commonly seen

throughout New Mexico, the Mediterranean Cypress is also known as the "drama tree" because of its tendency to bend with even the slightest of breezes.

In cosmetics it is used as astringent, firming, anti-seborrheic, anti-dandruff, anti-aging and as fragrance. It is also the traditional wood used for Italian harpsichords.

Iran's ancient cypresses

Cypress, *Cupressus sempervirens*, was the first choice for Iranian Gardens. In all of the famous Persian Gardens, such as Fin Garden, Shazdeh Garden, Dowlat-Abad, and others, this tree plays a central role in their design. The oldest living Cypress is the Sarv-e-Abarkooh in Iran's Yazd Province. Its age is estimated to be approximately 4,000 years.

Symbolism

In classical antiquity, the cypress was a symbol of mourning and in the modern era it remains the principal cemetery tree in both the Muslim world and Europe. In the classical tradition, the cypress was associated with death and the underworld because it failed to regenerate when cut back too severely. Athenian households in mourning were garlanded with boughs of cypress. Cypress was used to fumigate the air during cremations. It was among the plants that were suitable for making wreaths to adorn statues of Pluto, the classical ruler of the underworld.

The poet Ovid, who wrote during the reign of Augustus, records the best-known myth that explains the association of the cypress with grief. The handsome boy Cyparissus, a favorite of Apollo, accidentally killed a beloved tame stag. His grief and remorse were so inconsolable that he asked to weep forever. He was transformed into *cupressus sempervirens*, with the tree's sap as his tears. In another version of the story, it was the woodland god Silvanus who was the divine companion of Cyparissus and who accidentally killed the stag. When the boy was consumed by grief, Silvanus turned him into a tree, and thereafter carried a branch of cypress as a symbol of mourning.

In Greek mythology, besides Cyparissus, the cypress is also associated with Artemis and Hecate, a goddess of magic, crossroads and the underworld. Ancient Roman funerary rites used it extensively.

The most famous Muslim cemetery in Turkey where *C. sempervirens* is used widely is Istanbul Karacaahmet Cemetery. In Istanbul Turkish the tree is referred to as "Mezarlık Selvisi" (Cemetery Tree); its common name in Turkish and the name used in Turkish forestry is "Kara Selvi" (Black Cypress). Cypresses are mentioned extensively in the Shahnameh, the great Iranian epic poem by Ferdowsi.

In popular culture Italian Cypress is often stereotypically associated with vacation destinations to the Mediterranean region; Italy in particular. Often seen in travel posters for decades.

Other characteristics

In July 2012, a forest fire for five days devastated 20,000 hectares of forest in the Valencian village of Andilla. However, amid the charred landscape, a group of 946 cypress trees about 22 years old was virtually unharmed, and only 12 cypress were burned. Andilla cypresses were planted by the CypFire European project studying various aspects of the cypresses, including fire resistance.



Cupressus sempervirens

Il cipresso comune (*Cupressus sempervirens*) è una conifera appartenente al genere *Cupressus*.

Origine

Le sue origini sembrerebbero essere dell'Iran e dell'area orientale del mar Mediterraneo; sarebbe stato importato nel Mediterraneo occidentale dai Fenici e dagli Etruschi per motivi ornamentali dal momento che la sua forma piramidale di alcune varietà è molto caratteristica. È una pianta molto diffusa in Italia, ma molto probabilmente non è autoctono nonostante oggi rappresenti una delle specie più caratteristiche della penisola.

Si tratta di una specie relictiva, rappresentante della flora europea prima delle glaciazioni

Morfologia

Il cipresso mediterraneo è un albero sempreverde che raggiunge i 25 m, ma negli esemplari più vecchi può arrivare anche oltre i 50 m. La sua chioma è molto caratteristica e per motivi ornamentali si sono fatte selezioni mirate ad accentuare questa sua prerogativa trovando così oggi esemplari con la chioma ovale, altri con forma fortemente piramidale e chioma che scende fino a terra. Questo suo aspetto ha permesso all'albero di essere utilizzato anche come frangivento.

Possiede una corteccia di colore marrone grigio-bruno con lunghe fessurazioni e il suo legno molto duro è utilizzato per la costruzione di mobili in quanto il suo odore fortemente aromatico lo preserva dalle tarme, dai funghi e dai parassiti, mentre un tempo era anche utilizzato per la costruzione delle navi, data la sua grande resistenza all'umidità.

Le foglie, caratteristiche di tutti i tipi di cipresso, sono di colore verde scuro, molto piccole, lunghe circa 1 mm, embricate e appressate al rametto, dando una forma detta squamiforme.

I fiori disposti all'apice dei rametti, di colore giallo, sono indistintamente maschili e femminili su tutta la pianta.

I frutti sono delle piccole sfere di colore verde chiaro da giovani, dette galbule, squamate e, dopo una maturazione lunga due anni, cambiano colore diventando marroni, lignificano e si aprono lungo le fenditure delle squame per far cadere i semi alati (acheni).

Corologia ed ecologia

Originario dell'Asia Minore e del Mediterraneo orientale, oggi occupa tutto il suo bacino. Esiste da epoche molto remote anche in Iran e in Mesopotamia, in cui probabilmente era autoctono, il "Sarv-e Abarkuh", una pianta monumento nazionale iraniano, nella provincia di Yazd, ha una circonferenza di 18 metri e un'età stimata di 4.000 anni, rendendolo il cipresso più vecchio al mondo.

Predilige aree a clima caldo, con estati secche e soffre i freddi prolungati, ma la sua riproduzione spontanea e l'adattabilità a tutti i tipi di terreno lo ha portato a vegetare un po' ovunque, anche fino a 700 m s.l.m. e su terreni aridi, così da essere usato anche come un albero da rimboscimento, oltre che da frangivento e ovviamente il suo uso prominente come pianta ornamentale del giardino e paesaggio.

All'interno del giardino dell'Hotel Villa Cipressi sono presenti numerosi esemplari anche plurisecolari, soprattutto sul fronte a lago della Villa.

Questi sono così importanti da dare il nome al giardino e da renderlo famoso tra le Ville del Lago di Como.