

PLANT HEALTH CARE REPORT



Leyland Cypress

Leyland cypress (*Cupressus × leylandii*) is an evergreen that has become very popular in the landscape, especially for screening purposes. In 1888 in England, this hybrid was developed from Monterey cypress (*Hesperocyparis macrocarpa*) and Alaska cedar (*Cupressus nootkatensis*).

Many cultivars of this fast-growing, well-formed tree are available, ranging from deep green to bluish gray. Some yellow-tipped, variegated varieties are also commercially grown. Needles overlap to form a scale type, soft to the touch, making it a suitable holiday tree in warmer areas of the country where firs and spruce cannot be grown.

Leyland cypress grows best in plant hardiness zones 6 through 9 where it can rapidly attain heights of 60 to 70 feet with a spread of 10 to 15 feet. It grows up to 3 or 4 feet a year, tolerating a wide range of soil types as long as it has adequate drainage. Full sun is recommended for dense foliage and fast growth, but Leyland cypress can tolerate partial shade. It is also tolerant of pollution and salt spray.



Cupressus × leylandii 'Castlewellan'

While a hardy tree overall, Leyland cypress is overplanted in some areas and has problems. Its shallow rooting system makes it prone to windthrow and stress in hotter regions of its range. In colder regions, expect winter injury to periodically occur, especially on exposed sites. Also, Leyland cypress is susceptible to stem breakage from snow and ice loads.

It can be pruned or sheared into formal shapes and hedges. However, it is difficult to maintain for these uses due to its rapid growth rate. If Leyland cypress is planted as a privacy screen, trees should be spaced adequately (or alternate plants removed over time) to allow air and light penetration.

On poorly drained or excessively irrigated sites, Leyland cypress is susceptible to Phytophthora root disease. Other common disease problems include branch diebacks caused by the canker-forming fungi *Seiridium* and *Botryosphaeria*. Leyland cypress is more susceptible to canker disease fungi under drought conditions and as they age. Severely infected or dead branches should be removed in order to prevent inoculum from spreading. Maintaining plant vitality will also help reduce the incidence of canker diseases.

When their populations are high, bagworms, spruce spider mites, and juniper scale can reach damaging levels on Leyland cypress.

Monitoring and Treatment Considerations for Leyland Cypress

Late winter

Remove bagworm egg cases if practical. Reduce or remove co-dominant stems and branches to promote appropriate structure and reduce risk of failure. Remove cankered branches. Sample soil for nutrient and pH levels.

Early spring

Apply soil treatment to prevent Phytophthora root rot as needed. Expose and inspect root collar for problems; add mulch as needed. Monitor irrigation and soil moisture to minimize water stress and prevent root disease.

Mid- through late spring

Monitor for spruce spider mite and bagworm; treat as needed. Monitor irrigation and soil moisture to minimize water stress and prevent root disease. Fertilize, adjust pH, and amend soil according to soil analysis.

Summer

Re-apply soil treatment to prevent Phytophthora root rot as needed. Reduce or remove branches to maintain structure as needed. Monitor irrigation and soil moisture to minimize water stress and prevent root disease.

Fall

Monitor for spruce spider mite; treat as needed. Inspect mulch levels and adjust as needed. Monitor irrigation and soil moisture to minimize winter injury.
