



Hinoki Falsecypress, *Chamaecyparis obtusa*

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Summary

Foliage: Scale-like; evergreen

Height: About 60 feet

Spread: About 15 feet

Shape: Conical

Main Features

Hinoki falsecypress is a medium to large conifer. There are numerous cultivars that are more popular and prevalent in the nursery trade than the species. However, the species is a very beautiful conifer and well worth the hunt in garden centers or mail order nurseries. In my opinion, the hinoki falsecypress (species, not a cultivar) is more desirable than the sawara falsecypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera* species, not a cultivar) since hinoki falsecypress foliage is denser and brighter green, and the bark is a brighter red-brown color. Cultivars vary in size (growth rate), foliage size and color, and form. Many of the cultivars are considered “dwarf” since they do not attain the mature size of the species. Unless one intends to prune a hinoki falsecypress to control plant size, one must realize that a dwarf cultivar may grow to 30 feet tall, so landscape placement must take mature size into consideration. Foliage color varies from green, to bluish, to bright yellow. Growth rate varies from a mere 1 inch per year to more than 14 inches per year. Forms vary from conical to narrow conical to mounded to irregular shapes. Popular cultivars include ‘Crippsii’, a dwarf conical form with bright-yellow foliage; ‘Gracilis’, a dense conical dwarf form with dark-green foliage; ‘Nana Gracilis’, a very dense conical form with dark-green foliage that is somewhat cupped, and branch and foliage orientation can be likened to coral growth; ‘Tetragona Aurea’ and ‘Nana Aurea’ are dwarf narrow conical forms (the former grows about 6 inches per year and the later grows about 2 inches per year). These two yellow-leaved cultivars have an issue with foliage browning which may be related to a fungal disease or too much sun exposure.

Plant Needs

Zone: 5 to 8

Light: Full sun to part shade

Moisture: Average

Soil type: Average

pH range: Acid

Functions

There are several landscape uses for hinoki falsecypress, since there are many diverse cultivars that vary in size, form, color, and texture. The species or cultivars can serve as specimen plants (sufficient attributes that a plant can be featured as a focal point), in groupings, as accent plants, or in small garden spaces (dwarf cultivars). Yellow foliage cultivars have a very striking appearance; overuse of these can result in a gaudy or theme park appearance.

Care

Hinoki falsecypress is relatively carefree but will require irrigation during periods of drought.

Additional Information

Branches with scale-like foliage are referred to as “sprays.” There are numerous cultivars in the trade. Cultivars of this species are popular bonsai specimens. The American Conifer Society (<http://conifersociety.org/cs2/>) has an impressive conifer database (including photos for species and cultivars); one must register (no fee required) to view all information/photos in their database. To find species and cultivar information, go to the home page and click on ConiferBase, and then click on Database.

