



Hinoki False Cypress Care Sheet

Brought to you by
S & S Bonsai of Colorado Springs, Colorado
(Most of the included information is obtained from several
online sources.)



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*"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if
you were to live forever."*
—Mahatma Gandhi—

The Hinoki False Cypress

(*Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Compacta')

General Information: Scientific name *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Compacta', native to southern Japan and the island of Taiwan. This is an evergreen conifer with dark green fan-like foliage and reddish bark. It is a hardy tree that needs to be grown outdoors.

Some cultivars are available in different colors ranging from blue-green to golden yellow and chartreuse. It has drooping flat frond-like branches bearing small scale-like leaves. Hinoki False Cypress leaves are borne in pairs of two unequal sizes and shapes.

It produces pea-sized orange brown cones with 8 to 10 scales.

The smallest of all cypress, this tree makes a great choice for bonsai growers, reaching heights between 10 and 24 inches. However, when grown in the wild, the cypress can easily reach upwards to 75 feet! Keep in mind that this type of tree has foliage that can be challenging for bonsai but not impossible.

CARE

Temperature: Zone 5 - 8A. Most *Chamaecyparis* species are hardy to -10°F, but are in danger of die-back from cold, drying winds. Some degree of frost/wind protection is advised.

Lighting: The Hinoki Cypress loves full sun with warm climates. If this bonsai is not provided adequate sun, the lower and inner branches will turn brown and eventually die.

Air: As a hardy tree, the Hinoki Cypress does well in most conditions, with the exception of cold, drying winds.

Watering: For watering, the Hinoki Cypress is vulnerable to root rot, along with most Cypress spe-

cies. The challenge is that this tree needs a lot of water, especially during an active growth season. Therefore, make sure the soil never dries out but that it is also never waterlogged. To supplement the ongoing need for water, you can mist the foliage, allowing it to dry between watering. Most bonsai professionals recommend the Hinoki Cypress be watered in the morning to early afternoon, thus preventing the tree from standing in water overnight.

Fertilizing: Every two weeks, from early spring to mid autumn. Use Miracid, as *Chamaecyparis* is a lime-hater.

Pruning / Training: The major styling challenge for false cypress is the fatal combination of rapid growth, die-back from lack of light, and refusal to bud on old wood. If *Chamaecyparis* isn't pruned constantly, inside and lower branches will die and never grow back, making bonsai maintenance a headache. The tree is best shaped through constant pinching of new foliage - never use scissors to prune as foliage browns where cut. Hinoki cypress also tends to form awkward whorls of foliage if not properly pruned. *Chamaecyparis* will not bud back on old wood.

Most false cypresses are easy to wire, but branches may take a while to set and may need to be re-wired several times to avoid cutting into the tree. Can be wired at any time of year, but as wiring seems to sap the vigor of the plant, it is best to wait three months after repotting to wire.

Insects / Pests: Root rot, needle and twig blights, spruce mites, and scale. Juniper scale can be controlled by applying pesticides when the crawlers are active. The bagworm webs dead foliage and other debris together to make a nest. The covering makes the insect difficult to control. The nests can be picked off by hand. Diseases: Blight can be a problem on young plants in nurseries or old plants in landscape situations. In young plants, branch tips turn brown and die back until the whole branch or young tree is killed. Trees over five years old are

less susceptible. When older trees in landscapes are affected by tip blight, entire trees are seldom killed. Tip blight can infect trees during wet weather. The disease causes sooty pustules on the leaves, bark and cones. Scorch may look like a disease but is caused by excessive direct sun, freezing stress, drought or mites.

Propagation: Cuttings can be taken from young wood in July or August. Hinoki cypress cuttings will root readily. Can be grown from seed, but needs cold pre-treatment and may take up to a year to germinate. Veneer grafting can be used on Hinoki cypress in summer.

Repotting: To repot your Hinoki Cypress bonsai, this should be done every three to four years in mid spring for younger trees and then three to five years for the mature trees. When repotting, choose a richer mix if you grow your bonsai in a hot region, which will help keep the soil from drying out.

Since this tree is fast growing it is possible that you might need to repot every other year, often removing about one-third to one-half the root mass. You will need to determine the repotting schedule based on your specific tree. In any case, make sure the container used is not too big, which would cause problems with the soil remaining too wet.

Design and Styling: Slanted, straight-trunk, wind-swept, curved-trunk, and literati. It will not work for the broom style.