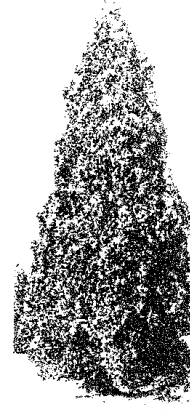


American Arborvitae

Thuja occidentalis



GENERAL DESCRIPTION: Arborvitae has been a staple of the urban and suburban garden primarily as a screen or hedge. It is also used as a foundation planting or in a grouping. While it is a beautiful and utilitarian plant, it has been overused and has a tendency to turn an unsightly yellow or brown in the winter. In the wild this is a tall evergreen tree with valuable wood. In the garden it has a vertical layered look and a pyramidal habit with multiple trunks that provides a soft but impenetrable barrier.

HABIT AND SIZE: 40-60' high and 10-15' wide (rarely this size in gardens). It has a dense, often broad-pyramidal form with flat, spreading, horizontal sprays (complex branching systems). Generally there is a single trunk but in the horticulture trade multi-stemmed forms are common.

LANDSCAPE VALUE: Good as a specimen plant but more often used as screen, hedge or foundation planting. Probably overused, some winter discoloration. Tends to thin out in shade conditions. It is important to use the newer improved cultivars.

LEAVES: Scale-like. 0.5" long and sharply pointed with the leaves on the main axis bearing glands and those on the branchlets not so obvious. Color shiny bright green on top and pale green underneath. The leaves are appressed and overlapping and of two variations; on one branchlet they are awl shaped and on a successive or different branchlet they are scale like, blunt, short and fused to the branch. They are in 4 rows on two edged branchlets.

FLOWERS: Mostly unisexual on different branches in very small terminal ovoid groupings without perianth (ament, catkin). Stamens in opposite pairs each with a scale-like connection and each bearing 4 anther-locules. Female aments with few overlapping scales each bearing 2 erect ovules. The scales become dry and spreading when mature.

FRUIT: Cones with unpointed scales with seeds that are broadly winged all around

BUD: Not observable.

DISEASES AND INSECTS: Bagworm, heart rot and red spider mites.

HARDINESS AND RANGE: Zones 2-7. Eastern North America

CULTIVARS: Probably 80-100 cultivars. 'Emerald'- has good color and does not deteriorate in winter, 'Techny'- broad based pyramidal form and dark green foliage even in winter, 'Nigra'- also dark green in all seasons.