

American Arborvitae/Northern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*)

Leaf: Leaves are evergreen, scalelike and abruptly pointed, 2 mm long, opposite in alternating pairs (in 4 rows), bright green above and pale green below, sometimes becoming yellow to brown in winter, with a spicy fragrance when crushed. There are two needle-like leaves per node, they are flattened (can't be rolled between the fingers).

Bark: Bark is gray to reddish-brown, 6-9 mm thick, fibrous, separated into flat, connected ridges.

Seed: The seed cone is longer than wide, with woody scales attached at the base.

Mature Shape: Single or multi trunked and columnar or conical in shape. Can grow 40-100 ft. tall, but under cultivation will probably be no taller than 30 ft.



Distribution: The primary range is in eastern-southeastern Canada (west to Manitoba) and adjacent states of New England and the Great Lakes region (west to Minnesota).

Soil conditions: American Arborvitae commonly grows in cool, moist, nutrient-rich sites, on mostly calcareous soils that are closer to neutral in pH. They can be found in lakes and river shores, uplands, cliffs, and talus.

Wildlife benefits: White-tailed deer, which use it for both shelter and browse. These trees also provide habitats for many species of birds.

Planting: Plants are susceptible to strong wind, snow, and ice damage, and young plants need protection from winter browsers. The species tolerates air pollution and heat as long as it is rooted in cool, moist soil.

Fun facts: American Arborvitae is one of New England's longest-living trees, known to grow for 200-300 years, hence the common name arbor-vitae (tree of life).

The lightweight, easily split wood was preferred for canoe frames by Native Americans, who also used the shredded outer bark and the soft wood to start fires. Today, the wood is used principally for poles, cross-ties, posts, and lumber. Cedar oil for medicine is distilled from the twigs.

Learn more: [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)!

