

## **FACT SHEET – Western Red Cedar**

### **Issue 11**

**Thuja plicata - Western Red Cedar** is a species of Thuja, an evergreen coniferous tree in the cypress family Cupressaceae native to western North America. It is the Provincial tree of British Columbia, and has extensive applications for the indigenous First Nations of the Pacific Northwest.



#### **Description**

It is a large to very large tree, ranging up to 65–70m tall and 3–4m in trunk diameter. Trees growing in the open may have a crown that reaches the ground, whereas trees densely spaced together will only exhibit a crown at the top, where light can reach the leaves. It is long-lived; some individuals can live well over a thousand years, with the oldest verified being 1,460 years.

The foliage forms flat sprays with scale-like leaves in opposite pairs, with successive pairs at 90° to each other. The foliage sprays are green above, and green marked with whitish stomatal bands below; they are strongly aromatic, with a scent reminiscent of pineapple when crushed.

#### **Uses**

The soft red-brown timber has a tight, straight grain and few knots. It is valued for its distinct appearance, aroma, and its high natural resistance to decay, being extensively used for outdoor construction in the form of posts, decking, shingles and siding. It is cultivated as an ornamental tree, to a limited extent in forestry plantations and for screens and hedges. It has been introduced to other temperate zones, including western Europe, Australia (at least as far north as Sydney), New Zealand, the eastern United States and higher elevations of Hawaii. It is also used to line closets and chests, for its pungent aromatic oils are believed to discourage moth and carpet beetle larvae, which can damage cloth by eating wool and similar fibres. This is more effective in a properly constructed red cedar chest (sometimes made entirely of red cedar), since the oils are confined by shellac and leather seals. A well-sealed red cedar chest will retain its pungent odour for many decades, sometimes for over a century. Its light weight, strength and dark warm sound make it a popular choice for guitar soundboards.

We have Western Red Cedar surrounding our office block here at Ramsay Timber see photo above.