



Farm Note

Department of Agriculture
Falkland Islands
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GROWING MONTEREY CYPRESS (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) FROM SEED

Monterey Cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) is a fast growing tree well adapted to dry, well drained soils in the Falkland Islands. It is easy and cheap to grow from seed. This Farm Note describes how to grow Monterey cypress from seed.

Preparing

- 1) Seed cones can be collected at any time of the year, providing they are not green. Mature deep brown cones that are beginning to open are the best.
- 2) To open cones place them in a plastic bag in an airing cupboard. Alternatively, place them in the bottom of the stove in a bowl for a few days.
- 3) Collected seeds should be placed in tepid water for about 24 hours. All seeds that are floating are not viable and should be discarded. Seeds that have sunk should then be left to dry out for a few hours.

Propagating

- 4) The best time to sow macrocarpa indoors will be late winter (July/August).
- 5) Sow seeds in a tray (the size of an A4 sheet of paper is ideal – approximately 30cm * 21cm) filled with potting compost or a suitable peat mixture of your own. This can be made from peat, peat ash and freshwater sand in the proportions 4:2:1. Do not use salty sand from the beach.
- 6) Spread the seeds at about 5mm apart from each other over the surface of the tray. This spacing should prevent their roots tangling which will assist the pricking out stage.
- 7) Place some good compost in a fine sieve and shake this over the top of the tray until the seeds are covered by about 3mm of the compost.
- 8) Place the tray on the floor and at a height apply some water with a fine rose on the end of the watering can. The height helps the water to spread out more minimizing the disturbance to the fine surface of the tray.
- 9) Place the tray into a plastic carrier bag and place it in either a refrigerator 4°C or a freezer <0°C for about 3 - 6 weeks. This will then break dormancy of the seed (normally it take be 5-6 months).
- 10) After this period remove the plastic bag and replace with a clear bag (e.g. freezer bags) then place into a room at 18 - 24 °C. Place the tray out of direct sunlight and shade it with a sheet of newspaper. Forcing is the technical term giving to increase plant growth, by controlling the environment.
- 11) There is no need to water the tray, as the freezer bag will conserve the moisture that would have evaporated.

Pricking Out & Hardening Off

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12) When seedlings do emerge they will have 3 seed leaves called cotyledons. When the next set of true leaves appear the seedlings will be about 5cm tall and by this time there should be quite a few seedlings in the tray.

13) Place the tray into a cold-frame or unheated poly-tunnel and leave for 3-6 weeks until fully hardy. Water occasionally but do not to let the tray dry out.

14) Using a blunt knife or similar instrument carefully loosen the soil whilst holding the seedlings by the cotyledons. Damage to the roots could affect on future growth of the tree.

15) Prick out the seedlings and transplant them into either pots or a small nursery which ever is desired.

16) Leave the trees in the nursery or in their pots to over winter. The optimum size for digging up the following winter is between 6-12 inches. Then be careful not to disturb the root system, as macrocarpa roots are very sensitive to disturbance. Make sure most of the soil stays on the roots when planting. During summer periods always keep the soil moist and weeds to a minimum. Macrocarpa does not like competition in the first few years.

Remember: PLANNING PREPARATION PERSISTENCE AND PATIENCE are the key factors to successfully growing trees.