



Nursery News

June 2007 - Research & Development
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An Arborvitae-A-Day...

The Common name Arborvitae comes from the Latin word meaning 'tree of life' and dates from the 16th century when Native Americans and early settlers used the Vitamin C rich foliage to treat scurvy.

Here at McHenry County Nursery and Glacier Oaks Nursery, the 'tree of life' is our lifeblood, and we grow several arborvitae cultivars up to a full and heavy 8-10ft. We propagate our Arborvitae from hardwood cuttings. The cuttings are rooted in sand and transferred to our Jumbo pots where they grow for two years, creating fibrous root systems and heavy tops. We grow them in beds in our forest soils for two to three more years before they are transplanted again to their finishing spacing. Here they are grown until harvest several years later. A hardy, healthy, root-pruned arborvitae for transplanting into a screen could be anywhere from 7 to 15 years old!

We strive to balance our plants and our environment with sustainable practices that ensure a healthy plant that survives and thrives in your design.

Well-Rounded Arborvitae

Arborvitae are most often used for hedges or year round privacy screens ([see screening article](#)). They also make a good wind block and accent tree to soften a view. Arborvitae can also be used in buffer strips around parking lots, median highway plantings or as a reclamation plant. The shrub type cultivars are naturally rounded, and make an excellent low maintenance foundation or border plant.



Arborvitae Care

Once established, arborvitae require little maintenance, and are relatively disease and insect free. Fertilizer applied every few years aids in faster growth. Pruning, if desired to stimulate growth, should be done early before new growth emerges. Growth will be mostly on branches and stems that have been cut back the previous year. New growth is a bright yellow green, an attractive contrast with the rest of the plant.

American Arborvitae

Thuja occidentalis is native to North America and along with the cultivars, are great trees for the Midwest, preferring colder climates.

Bark: red-brown, furrowed and peeling bark

Foliage: Flat sprays with scale-like leaves

Fruit: Cones are slender, yellow-green to brown

Soils: Prefers Moist soils but can withstand periods of extreme drought. Adaptable to a variety of soil conditions - poor soils that are rocky, sterile, dry, wet, compacted, clayey, exposed sites

pH: prefers alkaline pH. will survive, but not thrive, in neutral or acidic pH soils.

Site: Prefers full sun but will tolerate partial sun

Wildlife Love Arborvitae

An added benefit to planting arborvitae is the cover they provide for many types of wildlife year round. Arborvitae are important trees in natural areas. The leaves are one of the most popular winter foods for white-tailed deer and other mammals. Over-browsing can be a problem in heavy deer populations or hard winters. The arborvitae's dense form provides cover for birds and small mammals, and groupings of arborvitae provide cover in the winter for white-tailed deer, moose, and black bear.





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An Arborvitae-A-Day...

Big or Small, We have them all...

Over 300 cultivars have been selected for different shapes, sizes, and uses. We grow a variety of cultivars that perform well in the nursery and the landscape.



Mission (Techny) (15'x15')
 Excellent dark green foliage year round. Broad pyramidal form, ours are extremely dense and heavy, perfect for an instant hedge.



Emerald (10'x3')
 Displays excellent heat tolerance, as well as being cold hardy to -40 degrees. Does not discolor in winter. Foliage is a bright emerald green. Compact, pyramidal growth habit has a formal appearance.



Woodward (6'x6')
 A very uniform, naturally globe-shaped arborvitae that never needs trimming. Foliage is vertically radiating outward from center of plant – a neat compact shape. Excellent foundation plant that is quite hardy.



Pyramidal (15'x4')
 Narrow pyramidal, formal in outline with bright green, soft textured foliage. Best in full sun and protected areas.



Dark Green (20'x8')
 Pyramidal form with dark green foliage that lasts throughout the winter.

Holmstrup (5'x2')
 Extremely compact upright pyramidal plant. Bushy bright green textured foliage.



Little Gem (3'x6')
 Lush dark green foliage during the summer, slightly brownish during winter. Dwarf, dense, round form.