

Preventing Problems with Leyland Cypress
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Leyland cypress is a fast growing tree. It is very popular as a hedge because it can grow two to three feet a year in height. A Leyland cypress can grow to be 20 to 30 feet wide and at least 50 feet tall. It forms a thick wall of limbs and needles. A Leyland cypress hedge is effective at screening out noises and undesirable views.

Although they are very useful, they can create problems if not managed properly. Keep your Leyland cypress healthy and prevent problems with these care tips.

Certain diseases are becoming more common on Leyland cypress. Bot canker kills individual branches in the tree. The foliage may turn grey-green before it quickly turns brown and dies. Trace the dead limb back to the point where it is attached to a live limb and look at the bark. The dead branch will have darker bark. Run your finger over the bark. The dead bark will be slightly sunken in. Bot canker will kill individual branches and may spread into the interior of the tree and kill entire limbs.

Limbs infected with *Seiridium* canker turn yellowish and then brown to grey when they die. The cankers on the main stem are sunken, reddish and ooze sap profusely. There can be many cankers on a limb.

There is no spray you can use to control these diseases. They enter wounds and are worse during dry weather. The only controls we have are cultural. Keep the plant in good health so it can resist these diseases.

Plant Leyland cypress in well drained, sunny locations. They will not stand wet soils and will respond to wet feet by getting sick or dying. Mulch them after planting but do not over mulch. Mulches should be no deeper than four inches. Do not use landscape fabric unless the soil is very well drained.

Do not plant Leyland cypress in wet soils or poorly drained areas. Check soil drainage in areas before you plant or if the tree begins to have problems. To check drainage, dig a hole about a foot deep and wide. Fill it with water. Watch to see how long it takes for the water to drain out. If it takes longer than eight hours for the water to drain out, the soil is probably poorly drained.

Once again - do not plant Leyland cypress in wet or poorly drained areas! Select plants for wet areas that can withstand these conditions. Contact your local Extension Office for a list of plants for wet soils.

Do not water any more often than twice a week during drought - once a week would be even better. Watering more often than this is asking for problems that you may not be able to solve. Wet soils to a depth of twelve inches when watering and then let them dry out. Soils must dry

out between watering or roots may die. I recommend three-quarter to one inch of water once a week.

Do not plant Leyland cypress closer than eight feet apart. As the plants get big enough for the limbs to touch, remove every other tree. As the limbs rub together they cause wounds that can then be infected by these diseases. Remember that Leyland cypress get 50 foot tall or larger. Do not plant them where this will be a problem. Use smaller plants here like the hollies.

Dry weather is a big factor in the spread of these diseases. Leyland cypress must be watered once a week during drought. Once again - three-quarter to one inch of water once a week. Do not water too often! If plants get dry they are more likely to get these diseases. Put a soaker hose under the trees. Run it once a week just long enough to wet the soil twelve to eighteen inches deep. Then turn the water off and let the soil dry out.

What do you do if you already have these diseases? There are two things you must do. First of all, cut out the dead limbs. Be very careful to cut way back into good live tissue. Cutting diseased limbs and then good limbs may help spread the disease. If you like, you can clean your shears periodically with rubbing alcohol.

The second step is just as important. Find out what you are doing wrong and fix it. You may notice that the main problem I mentioned is watering. Solving tree problems usually come down to this anyway since there is little else we can do for them.

Bot canker is probably easier to control. Use the descriptions above to see which disease you have. Once either disease gets into the main trunk there is nothing we can do. We need to prevent these diseases since they may not be curable once we get them.

Since these diseases are getting to be very common, consider this when you plant. Avoid plants like Leyland cypress and Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria*) if you cannot give them the care and conditions I have described today.