

From The Bedford Extension Master Gardener HELP DESK

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QUESTION: Evergreen Arborvitae - Which Is The Best Choice For My Landscape?

A few years ago we received a telephone call in February from a client who wanted reliable plant information on two specific types of Arborvitae: *Thuja (standishii x plicata)* 'Green Giant' and *Thuja occidentalis* var 'American Pillar.' He requested information on height, width, and planting information for windbreak and hedges.

DIAGNOSIS / RECOMMENDATION

T. (standishii x plicata) 'Green Giant' grows 50'-60' tall at maturity and 12'-20' spread. [1] [2]

T. occidentalis var 'American Pillar' grows 25'-30' tall at maturity with a 3'-4' diameter spread at maturity. [3]



T. (standishii x plicata) 'Green Giant'
Photo: kentcoopextension.blogspot.com



T. occidentalis var
'American Pillar'
Photos: en.wikipedia.org



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to the VCE publication Giant Arborviate, Western Arborvitae, Thuja plicata (Pubs 3010-1487), the

“ ‘Green Giant’ is a very popular fast-growing clone in the nursery and landscape trade, and is recommended as a replacement for Leyland cypress. This cultivar is a putative hybrid between *Thuja plicata* and an Asian arborvitae species *Thuja standishii*. ‘Green Giant’ is reported as having green foliage in the winter (no typical foliage browning as other *Thuja* (and *Platycladus*) species, but observations prove otherwise.” [2]

On the other hand, from the information I was able to find on the *T. occidentalis* var ‘American Pillar’ it would seem to be exactly what the client was looking for – fast growing, hardy, deer resistant, and maintains its columnar shape with little pruning. Because it is a relatively new variety of the *T. occidentalis*, discovered in 1999 and patented in 2009 it does not have a long history on which to base any decision. [4] However, there are a few web sites on which posters track the growth of their ‘American Pillar’ cultivars in case you are interested in finding out more information about this new variety. [5]

If you are considering using any of the *T. occidentalis* cultivars for use as hedging or wind breaks please be aware that according to the VCE Publication Problem Free Trees for Virginia Landscapes (Pubs 450-237) in the section under ‘Problem Trees’, “*Thuja occidentalis* (arborvitae) tends to look very straggly with age.” [6]

Linda E., Bedford Extension Master Gardener

RESOURCE LINKS

- [1] <http://arborday.org/treeguide>
- [2] <https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/3010/3010-1487/3010-1487.html>
- [3] <http://www.americanpillarnursery.com>
- [4] <http://www.google.com/patents/USPP20209>
- [5] <http://forums2.gardenweb.com/discussions/1427684/american-pillar-arborvite>
- [6] <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/450/450-237/PPWS-47-pdf.pdf>

All resource links accessed January 20, 2016

Answers provided herein were based on specific situations and growing conditions.

These recommendations may or may not be appropriate for all circumstances.

For specific recommendations for your particular situation please contact your local Cooperative Extension Office.

MASTER GARDENER HELP DESK

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