

### *Taxodium distichum* bald cypress

#### Why Observe?

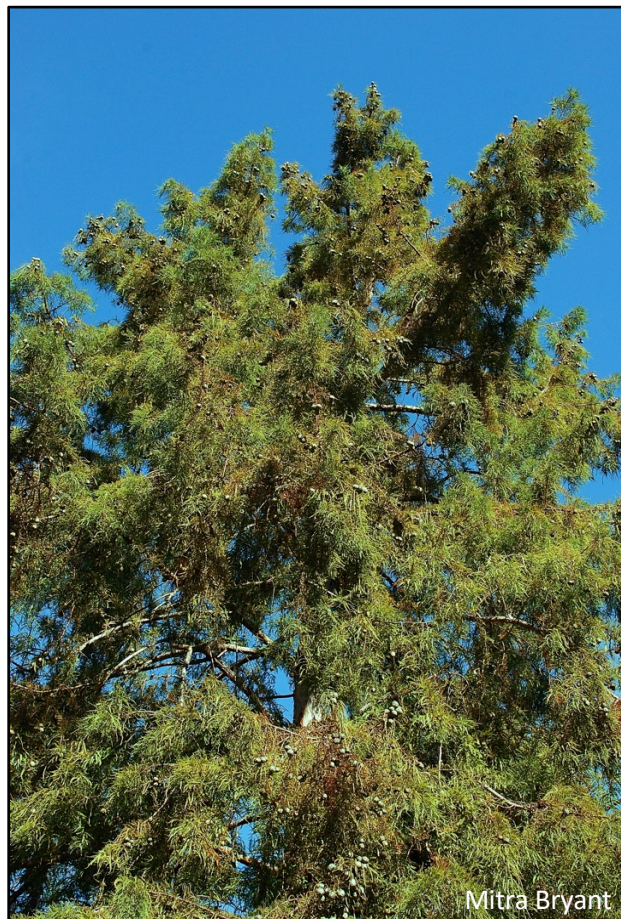
Some bald cypress trees in the southern U.S. have been reported to be 1,200 years old. The bald cypress is listed as threatened in the state of Indiana. Bald cypress usually grows in wetlands along running streams, lakes, and swamps with clayey or fine sandy soils at elevations about 100 feet above sea level.

The seeds of bald cypress are eaten by wild turkey, wood ducks, grosbeaks, and squirrels. Other bird species use the branches of bald cypress for foraging. Some species of birds, including bald eagles, use the tops of the tree for nesting. Bald cypress is also the larval host for the baldcypress sphinx moth.

#### Tips for Identification

The bald cypress is a perennial, deciduous, coniferous tree that can reach 100 to 150 feet in height. The crown of the tree is irregular, broad, and spreading. The branches are brown, and often covered with gray Spanish moss. The bark of the bald cypress is brown, thin, and fibrous, and often peels in strips. Leaves are needlelike, pale green, and turn an orangish-brown before they drop in the fall. Blooms are purple and are monoecious with separate male (pollen) and female (seed) cones. Mature trees develop brown seed cones with scales near the end of their branches. Bald cypress also develops root-like "knees" when grown in wet areas.

Be aware there is variation from individual to individual within a species, so your plant may not look exactly like the one pictured. If you are uncertain whether or not a phenophase is occurring, report a "?" for its status until it becomes clear what you are observing after subsequent visits.



Mitra Bryant



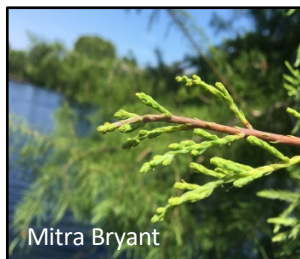
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*Taxodium distichum*  
bald cypress

**Breaking needle buds**

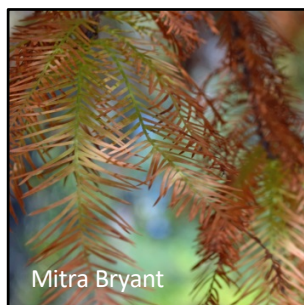
One or more breaking needle buds are visible on the plant. A needle bud is considered "breaking" once a green needle tip is visible at the end of the bud, but before the first needle from the bud has unfolded and spread away at an angle from the developing stem, or from other needles in a bundle.



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**Colored needles**

One or more needles show some of their typical late-season color, or yellow or brown due to drought or other stresses. Do not include small spots of color due to minor needle damage, or dieback on branches that have broken. Do not include fully dried or dead needles that remain on the plant.



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**Pollen cones**

One or more fresh, male pollen cones (strobili) are visible on the plant. Cones have overlapping scales that are initially tightly closed, then spread apart to open the cone and release pollen. Include cones that are unopened or open, but do not include wilted or dried cones that have already released all of their pollen.



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**Unripe seed cones**

One or more unripe, female seed cones are visible on the plant. An unripe seed cone is green, grayish or brown with scales closed together.



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**Needles**

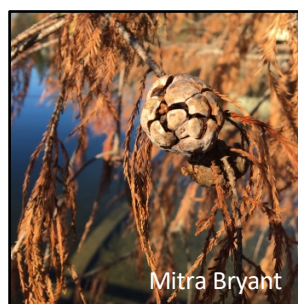
One or more live, unfolded needles are visible on the plant. A needle is considered "unfolded" once it begins to spread away at an angle from the developing stem enough that its point of attachment to the stem is visible, or from other needles in a bundle so that it is no longer pressed flat against them. Do not include fully dried or dead needles.



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**Open pollen cones**

One or more open, fresh, male pollen cones (strobili) are visible on the plant. Cones are considered "open" when the scales have spread apart to release pollen. Do not include wilted or dried cones that have already released all of their pollen.



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**Ripe seed cones**

One or more ripe, female seed cones are visible on the plant. A seed cone is considered ripe when it has turned brown and the scales have begun to spread apart to expose the seeds inside. Do not include empty cones that have already dropped all of their seeds.

**Phenophases not pictured:** Falling needles, Pollen release, Recent cone or seed drop