

# Totem Cypress

**Common name:** Totem Cypress

**Scientific name:** Cupressus sempervirens Totem

**Habitat and place of origin:**

This variety originates from France, but its species is typical of the Mediterranean region.

It adapts well to warm and dry climates, though it is resistant to temperatures ranging from -10°C to -15°C.

**Observations:**

**Leaf type:**

Evergreen. They are small, measuring between 2 and 5 mm, scale-shaped, and aligned in opposite pairs, completely covering the branches. They are dark green, giving it a leafy appearance.

**Height:**

It can grow between 8 and 14 meters, although in good conditions it can reach up to 15 meters. Its growth is slow, growing between 30 and 50 cm per year and does not reach its adult size until it is 25 years old.

**Flowering:**

Compared to other varieties, the totem cypress produces little or no fruit.

It has two types of flowers:

-Male: They are cylindrical, yellow, and measure between 3 and 5 mm. They release pollen between February and March.

-Female: These cluster in small green cones measuring 2 to 3 cm, with 8 to 14 scales.

In spring, these cones begin to form and take about 20 months to mature, turning brown in the following fall. Inside them are the seeds, which can germinate even after a long time.

**Description:**

It is a shrub from the conifer family, characterized by its narrow, compact shape, which can reach heights of up to 15 meters. Its bark is thin, grayish-brown, and cracks with age. The leaves are small, scale-like, and have a deep green color year-round. It produces few seeds, which helps maintain its slender shape. This cypress is very long-lived and can live for over 1,000 years.

**Culinary, medicinal, and industrial applications:**

There are no known specific uses for the Totem cypress in cooking.

**Medicinal:** Its cones and leaves have been used in traditional medicine for their properties, which help improve blood circulation and relieve issues such as coughs, sore throats, varicose veins, and hemorrhoids. They are also used to treat urinary tract conditions. Excessive foot sweating can be controlled with foot baths made from cone infusions.

**Industrial:** Its wood is valued in construction and furniture making due to its lightness and durability, as it resists attacks from fungi and insects. Thanks to its resistance to moisture, it has also been used in shipbuilding.

### Curiosities:

The Totem cypress, due to its tall and slender shape, is ideal as a decorative element in gardens, parks, pathways, and other landscapes. It has also been considered a symbol of the connection between earth and sky. It has been associated with Hades, the god of the underworld, and was planted near graves as a sign of respect and remembrance for the deceased.

In some cultures, planting cypresses at the entrance of homes represented a welcome to visitors. In China, the cypress is associated with good luck and longevity.

In addition, the doors of St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican are made of cypress wood and have withstood the passage of time for 1,200 years without deteriorating.



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