

## Leyland Cypress problems continue

Leyland Cypress (*Cupressocyparis x leylandii*) is an accidental hybrid of Monterrey Cypress and Alaska Yellow Cedar. The original hybrids were found in gardens in Leyland, England where these two species had been growing in close proximity. Interestingly, the two original parent trees do not overlap in their natural range.

These hybrids were found to be easy to propagate by cuttings and caught on quickly for use as specimen trees and for screen plantings.

But here in the Southeastern U.S. we've been seeing a number of problems with this plant for a number of years. So what's going on with this well-liked plant? I'll answer this question in today's article with help from an article written by Dan Mullins, UF/IFAS Extension Agent in Santa Rosa County.

Over the years we've identified several pest problems with this plant. These have included *Botryosphaeria* canker, *Seiridium* canker, *Phomopsis* blight as well as infestations by spider mites, scales and black twig beetles. Bagworms sometimes cause damage during the summer months.

Root problems are also common. On poorly drained, wet soils or where over watering occurs the trees are prone to become weakened and infected with root rotting fungi. This is a full sun loving plant and one that needs good air movement around the upper parts. Those planted in shady locations or under crowded conditions are sure to suffer eventually.

Most declining Leyland Cypress trees are probably due to overuse and being placed where they have little room to grow. Sometimes as gardeners, we tend to choose plants for a particular site based upon what we like best instead of choosing from a list of plant species that are best adapted to available light and soil conditions.

When a particular plant species or cultivar gets off to a good start and appears almost too good to be true there is often a temptation to use it in many areas of the landscape. Such repeated use (or overuse) can encourage development of insect and disease problems.

It's best to have diversity in the landscape. Use of several different well-adapted species whose requirements match the site conditions results in more healthy plants.

Some Leyland Cypress plantings will likely remain in good to moderate health, while others are expected to decline. Residents with these trees in the landscape are advised to allow plenty of space for air circulation and bright light. This might involve pruning nearby plants and even the eventual removal of every other plant from a screen planting that has become too dense. Avoid over watering by checking the irrigation system and redirect sprinkler heads to avoid wetting the foliage during irrigation.

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