



Metasequoia Dawn Redwood *A Truly Beautiful Tree*

Metasequoia glyptostroboides is considered to be a living fossil as it is the only remaining species of a genus that was widespread in the geological past.

In 1941 it was discovered in Hubei, China. In 1948 the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University sent an expedition to collect seed, which was distributed to universities and botanical gardens worldwide for growth trials. Seedlings were raised in New Zealand and trees can be seen in Christchurch Botanical Gardens, Eastwoodhill and Queens Gardens, Nelson. A number of natural *Metasequoia* populations exist in the wetlands and valleys of Lichuan County, Hubei, mostly as small groups. The largest contains 5400 trees.

It is an excellent tall growing deciduous tree to complement evergreens in wetlands, stream edge plantings to control slips, and to prevent erosion in damp valley bottoms where other forestry trees fail to grow. Spring growth is a fresh bright green and in autumn the foliage turns a red coppery brown making a great display.

It is also a most attractive winter branch silhouette. While the foliage is a similar colour in autumn to that of swamp cypress (*Taxodium*), it is a much taller erect growing tree, though both species thrive in moist soil conditions.

We import our seed from China and the uniformity of the seedling crop is most impressive. The timber has been used in boat building.

A fast growing deciduous conifer, with a straight trunk, numerous branches and a tall conical crown, growing to 45 metres in height and one metre in diameter.

Abies Silver Firs

These dramatic conical shaped conifers make a great statement in the landscape, long-lived and withstanding the elements. In the wild they start life as tiny seedlings in the shade of other trees, slowly creating a skirt of branches, waiting until there is blue sky above. Growth is then fairly rapid and continues for over a century. Volume growth of quality timber is prodigious, exceeded only by *Sequoia*.

Our European silver firs are five years old, transplanted twice and now ready for their final planting site. The *Abies* from Turkey, Greece and Spain show great drought and exposure tolerance. Two Mexican Highland species are quicker and ready in two to three years, with potential to thrive in most of New Zealand. If planting into a non-conifer site it is best to interplant with another conifer, such as *Larix* or *Cedrus*, to ensure a supply of mycorrhizal root fungi.

The roots are bulkier than other conifers, so dig a deeper hole in well drained soil. Keep them weed free for maximum growth and you will be rewarded seeing them grow into evergreen conical giants.



Abies vejari 20 years old on left
14 years old on right