

Sequoia

Sequoiadendron giganteum

Sierra Redwood

The Giant Sequoia is often called the largest living thing on earth, though *Sequoia sempervirens* is taller and a grove of aspens has greater mass. But these caveats aside, the Giant Sequoia lives up to the moniker of giganteum. It is extremely long lived and specimens have been documented greater than 3200 years. Giant Sequoia has great wildlife value providing both food and shelter. Sequoia is unique in that most seeds are only liberated when the cone dries out from fire. Fire is also required to clear out competition. Many attempts were made at logging Giant Sequoia. Due to the brittle nature of the wood, it is estimated that more than 50% of the wood was lost due to shattering on impact. Kings Canyon Sequoia National Park in California has the current largest specimens on earth. The General Sherman tree is 275' tall and contains 52,000 cubic feet.



Identification

Leaves

Evergreen, alternate, bluish-green, radiating, triangular in cross section. Stomates on both surfaces.



Flower/Fruit

Monoecious; nondescript flowers, seed cones mature in 2 years, 3-9 seeds per scale, two winged. Seed cones 1.5-3" long.



Bark/Wood

Reddish brown, very thick, fibrous, ridged, and furrowed. Wood is rot resistant, but very brittle.



Form

Conical or pyramidal when young and in open, very tall and straight when grown in competition. Branches horizontal to downward sweeping.



Uses

Wood is resistant to decay but is fibrous and brittle, making it generally unsuitable for construction. A few Christmas tree plantations are stocked with Giant Sequoia. Popular ornamental tree, though most do not anticipate its ultimate size.

Ethnobotany

Giant Sequoia was discovered in 1833 by the Walker party, but did not attract popular attention until its rediscovery in 1852. The species has played a pivotal role in the evolution of the American environmental movement.

Native Distribution

Western slopes of the California Sierra Nevada mountains.

Establishment

Fast grower. Doesn't tolerate competition.

Growing Conditions and Culture

Mature Size 200'Hx50'Wx10'dbh
 USDA Zone 6-8
 Light Requirements Part to Full Sun

Soils Acid
 Drought Tolerant? Yes
 Inundation Tolerant? Moderate

Pests/Damaging Agents

Virtually pest free.

Similar Species

Propagation

Seed - requires heat/fire treatment to liberate seed.

Source(s)

Benton County Soil and Water Conservation District, OR.