

# CARING FOR REDWOODS

The former Redwood Family, Taxodiaceae, includes evergreen (and some deciduous) coniferous trees. During the mild, humid climate of the Miocene Period (about 13 million years ago), trees in this family were very abundant, growing in extensive forests throughout the world, particularly in the Northern Hemisphere. Many species in this family have become extinct, but there remain 15 species growing today in locations from America to China to Tasmania. Among these ancient species, two are by far the most famous, impressive, and widely cultivated: the Coast Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) and the Giant Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*). The Coast Redwood enjoys the distinction of being the world's tallest living thing (current record height is around 385 feet), while the Giant Sequoia is the planet's most massive living thing (with trunk diameters in excess of 36 feet and heights reaching almost 300 feet). While the Coast Redwood and Giant Sequoia have numerous similarities in appearance, they remain fundamentally very different trees, native to significantly different climates and settings. Thus, each of these redwoods requires a significantly different approach in terms of care and growing conditions.

## COAST REDWOOD:

As its name implies, the coast redwood is a coastal species, native to the foggy, temperate regions of the far northern California coastline. This tree should be grown in areas where winter temperatures only occasionally drop below freezing, and never below 0°F. It loves misting, and thrives where it can receive a generous supply of water (although, like most plants, it definitely enjoys the opportunity to dry out somewhat in-between waterings). The Coast Redwood can withstand some cold temperatures, but will not tolerate

prolonged periods of sub-freezing weather. In terms of heat, the Coast Redwood can withstand significant periods of hot weather provided enough water is available. In hot climates, partial shading and occasional misting is advised for the Coast Redwood. In regions with colder climates, the Coast Redwood may be successfully grown indoors as a houseplant.

## GIANT SEQUOIA:

The Giant Sequoia (also known as Big Tree or Sierra Redwood) is a mountain species, growing at up to 9,000 feet in elevation. It is native only to a very limited range along the western slopes of the Sierra-Nevada mountain range in central California, where winters are cold and snowy and summers are hot and dry. Despite its limited natural range, the Giant Sequoia is a highly adaptable species. It is both cold and heat hardy, and can grow almost anywhere in the United States. The two primary keys to success with the Giant Sequoia are: [1] a nice, sunny growing location; and [2] a watering cycle which allows the Giant Sequoia's roots to dry out in between waterings. OVER-watering is the most common problem people have in raising their Giant Sequoias. In regions that experience particularly frigid weather in winter, some winter protection for young Giant Sequoias may be in order. If containerized, the main objective is to prevent the tree's roots and soil from freezing solid. If the tree is not in a container, heavy mulching around the tree's base or even a cold-frame or plastic tent over the tree can provide the needed protection from wind and cold. Some exposure to cold weather is actually healthy for the Giant Sequoia though, so in areas where protection from super-frigid weather is needed, the tree should be located in an area where it remains cold in winter, but just not cold enough to freeze solid. A non-heated basement or garage (with ample natural light) is often a suitable location for over-wintering a tree in very cold climates. As trees develop and grow larger, they typically become more accustomed to a region's climate and require less special care. Typically, a Giant Sequoia will "shut down" in winter, and may attain a brownish-bronze color – this is nothing to worry about.

## AT A GLANCE

### COAST REDWOODS:

- Suitable for outdoor growing in only MILD, TEMPERATE CLIMATES.
- Can be grown indoors as a HOUSEPLANT in cold regions.
- Likes MISTING and AMPLE WATER (but don't keep it soggy all the time).
- Does not tolerate prolonged exposure to temperatures below freezing.
- Good in almost any area that features a coastal influence (even in the Eastern U.S.).
- In hot regions, provide some shading in periods of particularly hot weather.

### GIANT SEQUOIAS:

- Can be grown virtually ANYWHERE!
- Select a FULL SUN location – a sun-loving, heat-tolerant species.
- Let DRY OUT (almost completely) between waterings.
- VERY COLD HARDY, but DO NOT let the containers, roots, and soil FREEZE SOLID.
- Prefers an OUTDOOR LOCATION, in all but the coldest climates.

### GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR ALL REDWOODS:

- Use 3-gallon containers (or larger) if potting trees.
- Soil should drain well (both in containers and in landscape plantings).
- Fertilize with 20-20-20 plant food or comparable.