

# **AN INVENTORY OF TREES NATIVE AND EXOTIC for VC61**

**Part 1: PINOPSIDA - conifers and Gymnosperms**

**John Killingbeck 2018**



## **INTRODUCTION**

The following survey of local coniferous and allied trees is based on observations going back several decades. It is an attempt, albeit no doubt incomplete, to catalogue all the species likely to be encountered in vc61. This of course, is a continuous process and new species are constantly turning up due to the widespread availability of novelties in garden centres and the like. However, against this increase of diversity of species has been a decreasing size in the average garden and spaces, particularly in urban areas, for the trees to grow. Many of the recently planted trees in such places stand little hope of reaching a mature size. Their common fate is to be 'topped' in the vain hope of controlling growth which not only fails as a means of control but also ruins the natural habit of the tree which in the case of many conifers is essentially symmetrical. Their owners eventually realise this and, in the end, remove them. For this reason, many species seen only in small gardens have been omitted.

The vice county as a whole has been fairly well covered, though the north less well than the south. Several large country estates, particularly in the north, which might hold interesting specimens have never been examined. Diversity of conifers varies greatly within the vice county. The richest belt is perhaps the East Yorkshire 'Fertile Crescent' between Driffield in an arc towards Brough, where there are many large old gardens and estates. In stark contrast, huge areas of arable districts have few conifers of any sort and usually only the commonest, although even here, something unusual can sometimes be found in village churchyards, manor houses or even farmyards.

In comparison with many areas of the country, notably Scotland, Wales, western and southern England the diversity and quality of conifers in vc61 is poor. But it is comparable to much of the east midlands and similar dryish somewhat air polluted districts to the lee of industrial conurbations. There are many species apparently never tried here that grow satisfactorily in North Yorkshire and other adjacent districts.

Any additional observations will be gratefully received.

John Killingbeck, February 2018

The genera alphabetically arranged within their families. Abundance is a subjective assessment categorised 'common'; 'frequent'; 'rare', but great variations occur within the region with some arable areas often very sparse in trees of any sort. Some suburban places are quite rich.

Family - **GINKGOACEAE**

**GINKGO** - unique "living fossil".

***Ginkgo biloba*** (Maidenhair Tree) - becoming quite frequent. Most decent sized older specimens are in large gardens but has been planted as street and crematorium tree in Hull e.g. Boothferry-road. Today, may turn up anywhere. Fruiting seems very rare here but has been recorded in York.

Family - **ARAUCARIACEAE**

**ARAUCARIA (MONKEY PUZZLE)** - unmistakable

***Araucaria araucana*** - frequent in parks, gardens, estates, some farmyards. Grows quite well in vc61 and known to produce fertile seed where male and female are adjacent but not to regenerate here.

Family - **CEPHALOTAXACEAE**

**CEPHALOTAXUS (PLUM YEWE)** - Shrubby and fairly insignificant in 61

***Cephalotaxus harringtonia*** (Cow Tail Pine) - rare except in form 'Fastigata' offered in garden centres.

***Cephalotaxus fortunei*** - rare, Thwaite Hall.

Family - **CUPRESSACEAE**

**CALOCEDRUS** - distinctive "exclamation mark" habit when healthy and mature.

***Calocedrus decurrens*** (Incense Cedar) - infrequent as mature specimen mainly big old gardens and estates, churchyards (e.g. Cottingham) etc. Young variegated form sometimes seen in small domestic gardens.

**CHAMAECYPARIS ("FALSE" CYPRESSES)** - The classic "conifers" of gardens.

***Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*** (Lawson's Cypress) - common in type form in gardens, parks, estates, churchyards, plantations etc. both rural and urban. Many ubiquitous ornamental forms seen mostly in gardens. Frequently self-sown.

***Chamaecyparis pisifera*** (Sarawa Cypress) - fairly frequent, particularly churchyards and old Victorian gardens. Usually in the forms 'Plumosa' and 'Squarrosa', which are semi juvenile, and sometimes 'Filifera'. Hesse cemetery is a good place to see them. Small variants common in domestic gardens.

***Chamaecyparis obtusa*** (Hinoki Cypress) - fairly frequent in its various forms in churchyards and gardens but type wild form seems rare.

**CRYPTOMERIA** - potentially huge tree unimpressive in vc61.

*Cryptomeria japonica* (Japanese Cedar) - infrequent and not flourishing here. Mostly large old gardens, churchyards etc. e.g. Londesborough - sometimes as var. 'Elegans'. Several freakish dwarf forms seen in small gardens.

**CUPRESSUS ("TRUE" CYPRESSES)** - less common than *Chamaecyparis*.

*Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress) - frequent, particularly east of Wolds towards the coast in old suburbs, hotels etc. with large gardens but also some isolated localities. Most are old. Grows quite well in vc61. Yellow form 'Lutea' is infrequent and 'Goldcrest' common in smaller gardens.

*Cupressus sempervirens* (Italian/Mediterranean Cypress) - Frequent and increasing, particularly since the vogue for "Mediterranean" style gardens. Almost always in the classic tightly fastigiata form. Few are of any size and old trees are rare, e.g. Hotham Hall. Yellow form 'Swane's Golden' is rare (Market Weighton).

*Cupressus arizonica* (Arizona Cypress) - usually in blue forms of var. *glabra* (which is sometimes identified as separate species). Quite infrequent but increasing. Few of much size or age e.g. West Ella.

*Cupressus goveniana* (Gowen Cypress) - probably rare. Only known tree in vc61 used to grow at Thwaite but others may exist (several in York).

**HYBRID CYPRESSES** - only one type seems to occur in vc61.

X *Cupressocyparis leylandii* (Leyland Cypress) - common almost everywhere. Several clones including one variegated. Yellow form 'Castlewellan' also common.

**CUNNINGHAMIA** - unusual conifer resembling gangly monkey puzzle.

*Cunninghamia lanceolata* (Chinese Fir) - rare, known only from young trees at Bishop Burton college.

**JUNIPERUS (JUNIPERS)** - one native species, though not to vc61, and several exotics many of which are shrubs, so not listed.

*Juniperus chinensis* (Chinese Juniper) - rather infrequent as type tree, but has a number of ornamental forms. Mature trees, including yellow form 'Lutea', in large old gardens and churchyards e.g. Bishop Burton college, Holme on Spalding Moor church.

*Juniperus communis* (Common Juniper) - variable, shrubby, barely a tree. Quite frequent but almost always as ornamental garden forms like fastigiata 'Hibernica' in vc61., but one curious oddball 'wild' planting in high Wolds near Settrington Beacon.

*Juniperus recurva* (Drooping Juniper) - very infrequent in gardens e.g. Thwaite Hall. Small.

**METASEQUOIA** - distinctive "living fossil".

*Metasequoia glyptostroboides* (Dawn Redwood) - increasingly frequent in gardens and parks, sometimes elsewhere. Grows best in damp sheltered locations and produces cones in vc61. Golden form also occurs.

**PLATYCLADUS** - one species of cypress like tree.

*Platycladus orientalis* (Oriental Thuja) - fairly frequent but thinly scattered, particularly in churchyards e.g. Hessle, but also in other large old gardens -Wassand Hall- (said to be "Yorkshire Champion"). Golden form 'Elegantissima' also widespread.

**SEQUOIA** - famous as world's current tallest tree - not so in vc61.

*Sequoia sempervirens* (Coast Californian Redwood) - infrequent but widespread on large estates and some gardens. Small in comparison with potential and sometimes rather gaunt in vc61. A bizarrely dwarf form is sometimes grown in domestic gardens (a dwarf giant!)

**SEQUOIADENDRON** - famous as world's most massive tree.

*Sequoiadendron giganteum* (Giant Californian Redwood/Wellingtonia) - quite frequent and generally more flourishing than Coast Redwood in vc61. Typical 'must have' landscape tree of large estates - also parks, big gardens and some small.

**TAXODIUM** - deciduous conifer resembling the commoner Dawn Redwood.

*Taxodium distichum* (Swamp Cypress) - infrequent and fairly slow growing. Mostly in large older gardens, usually near water though will grow on dryer sites e.g. Springhead. In water may produce pneumatophores but these are only weakly developed on a few trees in vc61 e.g. Thwaite Hall. Otherwise grows surprisingly well to about 20m in vc61.

**THUJA** - often called 'cedars' but more like cypress.

*Thuja plicata* (Western Red Cedar) - quite common, widely planted in gardens, estates, churchyards and some plantations. Growing quite well even on chalk in vc61 but of very modest attainment compared to potential. Occasionally self- sown and may layer itself. Sweetly scented. Variegated form 'Zebrina' v. infrequent.

*Thuja occidentalis* (Eastern White Cedar) - infrequent, mostly confined to large old gardens and churchyards. Usually sickly looking. Has a number of commoner garden forms, notably 'Rheingold' and the fine Italian cypress- like 'Smaragd'.

*Thuja koraiensis* (Korean Thuja) - rare, only seen as young tree Bishop Burton College.

**THUJOPSIS** - one distinctive species.

*Thujaopsis dolabrata* (Hiba) - quite infrequent, usually in large estate gardens. Small in vc61 compared to wetter areas but looking healthy. Variegated form in small gardens.

**XANTHOCYPARIS** - one species of cypress

*Xanthocyparis nootkatensis* (Nootka Cypress) - fairly frequent in churchyards and old gardens, but not often seen elsewhere except as strikingly droopy form 'Pendula' which is gradually becoming quite popular in domestic gardens.

## Family - **PINACEAE**

**ABIES (FIRS)** - overall, poorly represented in the region perhaps for climatic reasons.

***Abies grandis*** (Grand or Giant Fir) - fairly frequent, though not attaining great size here. Usually in large gardens or estates. More rarely plantations as at Wheldrake Woods, where it is widely self-sown.

***Abies nobilis*** (Noble Fir) - infrequent, mostly older specimens in big Victorian estates and gardens. Younger trees in other situations including Xmas tree crop. Of relatively modest growth in vc61.

***Abies alba*** (European White Fir) - probably very infrequent/rare and of poor growth. Warter estate.

***Abies concolor*** (Colorado White Fir) - very infrequent, except as small ornamental. Semi-mature e.g. at Thwaite Hall estate.

***Abies nordmaniana*** (Nordman Fir) - becoming increasingly frequent due to recent popularity as Xmas tree. Mostly young, though growing well. Usually plantation Xmas crop or in gardens where later planted out. Also sold in garden centres.

***Abies koreana*** (Korean Fir) - frequent but always small. Usually ornamental parks and gardens of all sizes.

***Abies pinsapo*** (Spanish Fir) - probably rare, but growing strongly at Thwaite Hall.

**CEDRUS (CEDARS)** - all three main species found here.

***Cedrus libani*** (Cedar of Lebanon) - fairly frequent but the least common of the main species. Mainly found on large estates and some big gardens e.g. Sledmere.

***Cedrus atlantica*** (Atlas Cedar) - almost always in the blue form *glauca*. Very frequent in gardens of all sizes but only maturing in the largest. Also public parks, roadsides, churchyards etc.

***Cedrus deodara*** (Indian Cedar/Deodar) - very frequent in places as above.

**LARIX (LARCHES)** - well known deciduous conifers, three widespread species.

***Larix decidua*** (European Larch) - common and widely planted in many locations from domestic gardens to large exposed plantations and shelterbelts. Sometimes self-sown but not naturalised in vc61.

***Larix kaempferi*** (Japanese Larch) - frequent in plantations but perhaps less often in general planting than European species.

***Larix x eurolepis*** (Hybrid Larch) - frequency as above. Said to back cross with Japanese species thus close and can be hard to separate.

**PICEA (SPRUCES)** - much commoner than firs in vc61.

***Picea abies*** (Norway Spruce) - common in all localities from domestic gardens to plantations, where it is one of the commonest timber conifers and doing well on chalk. The archetypal Xmas tree - sweet smell, needle drop and 'cuckoo clock' cones. Occasionally self-sown.

***Picea sitchensis*** (Sitka Spruce) - very frequent but less so than Norway and usually less flourishing in vc61. Mostly in plantations and shelterbelts. Blueish sheen distinguishes it from Norway at a distance.

***Picea orientalis*** (Oriental Spruce) - very infrequent. Mature trees in a few old estates like South Dalton. Also, including ornamental varieties - like yellow 'Aurea', in domestic gardens.

***Picea omorica*** (Serbian Spruce) - quite frequent, mainly in gardens but also a few plantations e.g. Londesborough, Welton and Millington areas, doing well on chalk. Distinguished at a distance by very narrow crown.

***Picea pungens*** (Colorado Spruce) - frequent in gardens almost always in one of its very blue forms. Few trees of size.

***Picea breweriana*** (Brewer's Spruce) - very infrequent in gardens, usually young and small.

***Picea smithiana*** (Morinda Spruce) - rare and poorly developed in vc61 at Wassand Hall but grows well in Scarborough and other adjacent regions.

***Picea glauca*** (White Spruce) - very localised in odd plantations e.g. Birdsall, Kirby Underdale areas. Said to be widely planted in Danish shelterbelts, from where idea of planting it in vc61 may have arisen, because otherwise undistinguished.

**PINUS (PINES)** - several common species and a number of rarer ones.

***Pinus sylvestris*** (Scots Pine) - common in many situations from domestic gardens and landscaping to plantations. Common timber conifer. Not native to vc61 but widely naturalised particularly on acid sandy soils. Fastigate form sometimes encountered in gardens.

***Pinus nigra*** (Black Pine) - common particularly plantations and shelterbelts but also gardens, parks, urban roads and landscaping. Several types: tall ssp. *laricio* (Corsican Pine) is commonest in timber plantations; branching ssp. *nigra* (Austrian Pine) commoner in gardens. Only infrequently self-sown in vc61.

***Pinus contorta*** (Lodgepole Pine) - frequent, particularly in plantations. Regenerates freely in some places like Allerthorpe Common. Two closely related subspecies recognised - ssp. *latifolia* seems to be the commoner in vc61.

***Pinus radiata*** (Monterey Pine) - fairly frequent in places and increasing. Gardens, windbreaks, specimen planting etc. Very fast growing. May sustain damage in severest winters in vc61. No large old trees occur.

***Pinus pinea*** (Stone/Umbrella Pine) - becoming quite frequent since vogue for 'Mediterranean' gardens. Most trees are fairly young but growing steadily and seem hardy in vc61.

***Pinus pinaster*** (Maritime Pine) - infrequent but increasing as a result of Mediterranean holiday souvenir planting perhaps? Mostly young trees in gardens in vc61, but naturalised in Southern England.

***Pinus halapensis*** (Aleppo Pine) - very infrequent, yet another but rarer Mediterranean holiday trophy. Said to grow poorly in UK but young trees in vc61 doing well so far. Mainly gardens.



***Pinus wallichiana*** (Bhutan Pine) - fairly frequent mainly in unsuitably small domestic gardens where it is ruined by lopping. Larger trees occur where space allows e.g. Houghton Hall estate. Distinctive drooping habit and large cones.

***Pinus strobus*** (Weymouth Pine) - similar to Bhutan but much scarcer in vc61 and more upright in habit. Brandesburton. Also dwarf forms in domestic gardens.

***Pinus ponderosa*** (Western Yellow Pine) generally rather rare - particularly as a large specimen e.g. South Dalton estate.

***Pinus cembra*** (Arolla Pine) - probably rare. Good specimen in Cherry Burton churchyard.

The following pines also encountered in vc61 - usually young and in small domestic gardens so as yet, not really established as significant trees:

***Pinus heldreichii*** (Bosnian Pine) - Middleton on the Wolds, visible from road - promising.

***Pinus parviflora*** (Japanese White Pine)

***Pinus mugo*** (Mountain Pine) - usually dwarf forms.

***Pinus aristata*** (Bristlecone Pine)

***Pinus coulteri*** (Big Cone Pine) - Withernsea.

**PSEUDOTSUGA** - one distinctive species widespread in vc61.

***Pseudotsuga menziesii*** (Douglas Fir) - quite frequent in plantations, estates and some gardens but attainment poor in vc61 in comparison with huge potential (one of world's tallest trees). The blue var. *glauca* used to grow at Anlaby House.

**TSUGA (HEMLOCK TREES)**

***Tsuga heterophylla*** (Western Hemlock) - quite frequent locally in plantations, sometimes in gardens. Modest attainment in vc61 compared to potential. Quite often self-sown.

***Tsuga canadensis*** (Eastern Hemlock) - very infrequent, mostly old estate gardens like South Dalton. Dwarf forms occasional in small gardens.

Family - **TAXACEAE**

**TAXUS (YEWS)** - a native to Britain.

***Taxus baccata*** (Common Yew) - common, perhaps native to vc61, but if not certainly naturalised in woods etc. particularly on chalk. Also widely planted, typically in churchyards and old gardens. There are few large old specimens in vc61 however, unlike other parts of UK: Cherry Burton - 6.00m; Londesborough - 4.00m (approx. girths). Upright "Irish Yew" *Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata' is almost as common in churchyards and golden forms are widespread.

***Taxus x media*** (Hybrid Yew) - recently offered commercially, probably very infrequent as yet.

**TORREYA (NUTMEG TREES)** - two yew like species in vc61

***Torreya californica*** (Californian Nutmeg) - rare in vc61 of modest attainment so far - Thwaite Hall.

***Torreya nucifera*** (Japanese Nutmeg) - as above.

**References:**

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Johnson O. and More D. 2004 *Collins Tree Guide*. Harper Collins, London.