

Incense-cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*)



Summary:

The incense can be found in Oregon and throughout California. In Oregon, it extends from the southeastern slopes of Mt Hood east into central Oregon and south along the Cascade Range and in California it's found many places, to list a few the North Coast, South Coast, and Sierra Nevadas.

Incense-cedar is an evergreen tree that grows 70 to 190 feet tall and up to 4 feet in diameter. Young trees have dense, symmetrical, pyramid-shaped crowns with branches that reach to the ground. As they mature they lose this shape a bit and old trees have swollen bases and more irregular crowns. Very old trees often have dead tops. They grow slowly and can live over 500 years!

Incense-cedar bark is thick, fibrous, furrowed, and ridged. Their leaves are scale-like and flat. Incense-cedar root system consists of wide lateral roots and downward-growing roots so a very well established root system. These are long living trees for a reason! Incense-cedar reproduces by seed. Female cones develop on the ends of the previous year's growth. Incense-cedar seeds are wind dispersed. Incense-cedar grows on a wide variety of sites ranging from shaded areas to more exposed environments.



Fire effects:

Mature incense-cedar trees have thick bark that helps protect the tree from low-severity surface fires. Incense cedars can reproduce post fire mainly by off site sources due to the seed dispersal being mainly by wind but can also be reproduced by parent trees that survive during the fire.

The needles of incense-cedar are highly flammable due to high amounts of resins which tend to increase in hot, dry summer months, making incense-cedar increasingly flammable as the fire season advances.

Incense-cedar saplings often are very dense on the lower portion of the tree. They tend to have thinner bark, flammable crowns, and branches that reach the ground making them ladder fuels in the instance of a fire. Young incense-cedar trees are likely to totally be consumed by fire while mature incense-cedars have thick bark and are more fire resistant. All depending on fire severity.

References:

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