

Dawn Redwood *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*

The dawn redwood, from the cypress family (Cupressaceae), was once one of the most widespread tree species in the Northern Hemisphere during the Tertiary period. Scientists had identified fossil remains of this redwood in North America, Asia and Greenland and had concluded that it must have been extinct for millions of years. However, in 1944, a Chinese forester found an enormous dawn redwood in the Sichuan province of China. In 1948, a small group, partially financed by Save the Redwoods League and including future League President Ralph Chaney, traveled to south-central China and found a few thousand of the trees growing in lowland canyons. Villagers in the Sichuan region were using the foliage for cattle feed and the wood for bridges and other construction. The trees are ideal for screening. Screening allows for privacy, noise reduction and protection from elements. They also provide winter cover for birds, small mammals and deer.

The Dawn Redwood has colorful green needles that turn a beautiful bronze color in the fall prior to falling off. The Dawn Redwood is one of the three deciduous coniferous trees that are rare. These include the **Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*)**, the **European Larch (*Larix decidua*)**, and the **Bald-Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)**. At first sight these three tree species appear to be your typical evergreen (Conifer). Deciduous conifer means that it sheds its needles in the fall. The tree is bare in winter and grows new needles in the spring. The Dawn Redwood is the smallest of the three redwoods. Dawn Redwoods are typically between 50 and 60 feet tall, but can grow taller than 160 feet with a trunk about 7 feet in diameter. This tree grows at a fast rate, with height increases of more than 24" per year. The needles are green when alive and are about half an inch long. When the needles are dead they turn an orangey brown color. Currently planted on the cemetery grounds are two of the three species listed above. The Dawn Redwood and the Bald Cypress. There are plans to plant the European Larch in the future so we will have all three of these rare trees represented on the cemetery grounds.

The trees grown natively in the Sichuan-Hubei provinces of China, which are located in the west and south east. The seeds of the tree were then brought over to the US and now the dawn redwood grows almost anywhere East of the Mississippi river. The trees are rather hardy and can survive in heat and frost though it cannot stand nutrient rich environments.

The dawn redwood is a living testimony to the surprises still to be found in nature. When dinosaurs roamed the earth, it is believed that trees in the Redwood family were very abundant. Today, only 9 genera and 15 species exist.

You can find Dawn Redwood trees in the Salt Lake City Cemetery on the South East corner at the intersection of Grand (270 North) and Center street. You can also find some newly planted Dawn Redwoods along Central Avenue and 310 north as well as in the area of 990 East and 385 North.

