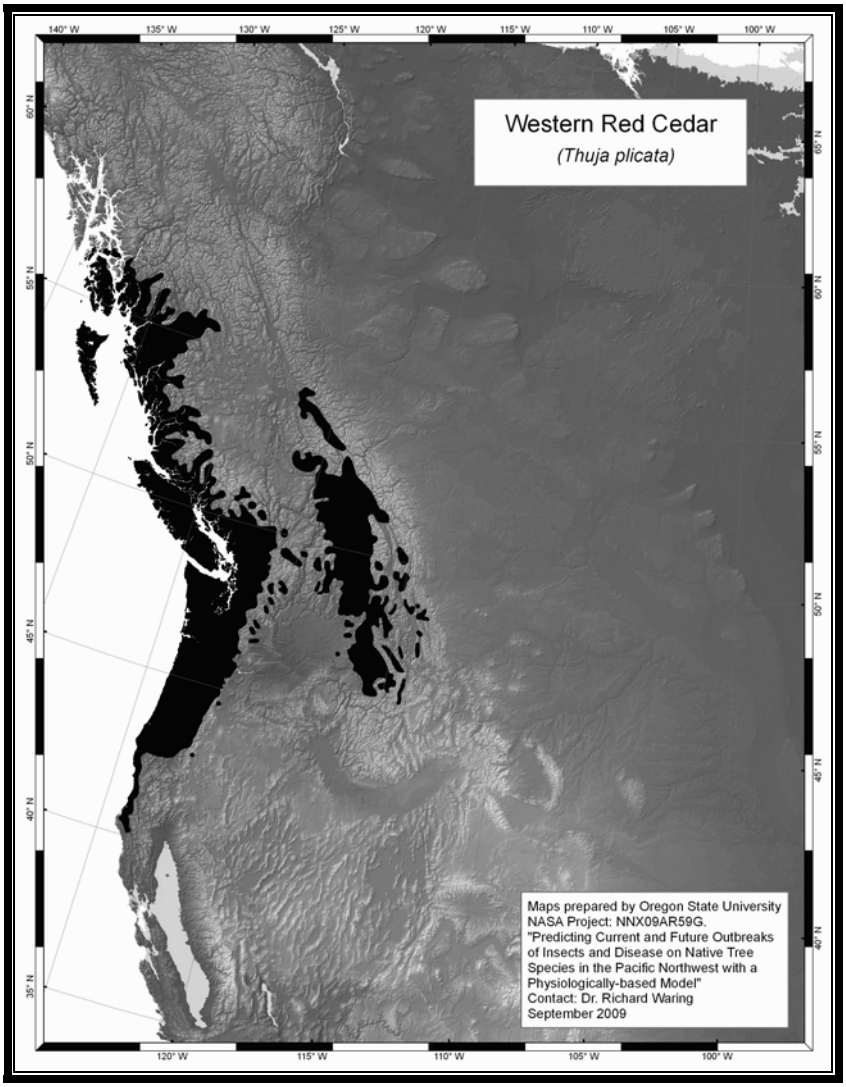
Species Silvics

Scientific Name: *Thuja plicata*

Common name: Western redcedar



Climate:

Western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) grows to 60m+ in moist climates in the Pacific northwest from sea level up to 2000m. The species occurs in two distinct regions: the Pacific coast from southeast Alaska and the Queen Charlotte islands to Northwest California along the coast, and interior from the Canadian Rockies south into Idaho and Montana. Trees have distinctive bark and a drooping crown form. The species prefers fresh to wet soils and is tolerant of flooding. Redcedar can grow on poor soils, but grows best on rich sites. The trees are very shade tolerant and are often considered a late successional stage species which replaces Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) on many sites.

Bark

Smooth shiny reddish bark when young, and fibrous grey or reddish brown bark which can be removed in strips when mature.

Wood

Durable and lightweight wood that is very resistant to decay because of high tannin concentrations. The wood is water resistant and easily split making it ideal for outdoor construction, decks, shakes, etc. Very aromatic and used for meat smoking.

Foliage

Scale like leaves with a droopy, braided appearance. Branches are often in a drooping J shape.

Cones

Seed cones are small (1-2cm), ovoid in shape with small scales which open to release small double winged seeds.

Ecology

The buttressed roots of redcedar can provide shelter for mammals from squirrels to overwintering bears. Old trees often have heartwood rot fungi which hollow the tree and provide a protective cavity. Foliage and seedlings are also a favourite browsing food for many cervids.