

WACD PLANT MATERIALS CENTER

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Western Hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*)

Distribution

The native range of Western Hemlock extends along the Pacific coast from central California north to the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska. It grows inland from the coast, up the western slope of the Cascades to 4,000 feet elevation. It is also found along the east slope of the Cascade and in North-eastern Washington, in rich, moist sites.

Growth Habit

Western Hemlock can grow anywhere from 140 to 180 feet tall. Its trunk can grow 2 to 4 feet in diameter. The maximum height reported for a Western Hemlock is 259 feet tall. The largest diameter was recorded at 108". The narrow crown has a drooping leader with branches feathering downward. Needles are short, flat and irregularly spaced.

Adaptability

Western Hemlock grows throughout Western Washington, from sea level, up to 4,000 feet. It grows on sites that range from fairly dry to moist, in exposures that range from sunny to shaded, and in soils from clay to humus, although it grows best in soils with high organic content. Its shade tolerance allows it to be used successfully as an understory species. It grows best with sun, ample moisture and rich soil. While it grows best in moist soils, it should be noted that it does not grow in soils that are saturated for extended periods. It is poorly suited to sites where the water table is less than 6 inches deep.

Comments

- Western Hemlock is an important species in riparian zones. It grows in association with most of the typically riparian species.
- It is successfully used as a pioneering species in restoration projects, often growing as a shaded understory species, or as a climax species, creating a canopy of its own.

