Japanese Cryptomeria,
*Cryptomeria japonica*

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**Summary**

**Foliage:** Short awl-shape needles; evergreen  
**Height:** About 60 feet  
**Spread:** About 25 feet  
**Shape:** Conical to narrow conical

**Main Features**

Japanese cryptomeria is a handsome medium to large conifer with a conical to narrow conical form. This species is fast growing and is relatively popular in the trade. If lower limbs are removed, one can observe a beautiful orange-brown bark (on most trees). The foliage tends to turn brownish on the south side of the plant in winter due to desiccation; however, foliage will turn green in spring. Japanese cryptomeria does have a few disease problems, although these are not considered a major issue at this point in time. Reports of a branch dieback disease incidence in the southeast U.S., some leading to tree death, have been surfacing in the last several years; at present, there are no definitive diagnoses. Some cultivars are less hardy than the species. ‘Elegans’ is a beautiful dwarf cultivar with long (juvenile) awl-like needles that turn a purplish-brown in the winter; however, this cultivar has been especially disease-prone in southwestern Virginia.

**Plant Needs**

**Zone:** (5) 6 to 8  
**Light:** Full sun  
**Moisture:** Average; somewhat drought tolerant  
**Soil type:** Average  
**pH range:** Acid

**Functions**

Japanese cryptomeria is certainly worthy of specimen status (featured alone due to sufficiently attractive attributes). Because it is a relatively fast-growing conifer, it makes an attractive border species if there is enough room to accommodate its large size.

**Care**

There are no special care recommendations for this species except to irrigate in periods of drought.
**Additional Information**

There are numerous cultivars of Japanese cryptomeria that vary in form (dwarf, narrow, and compact) and foliage types (variegated, spiraled, and long-needled). An especially attractive Japanese cryptomeria planting lines the entranceway of the National Arboretum bonsai collection (Washington DC).