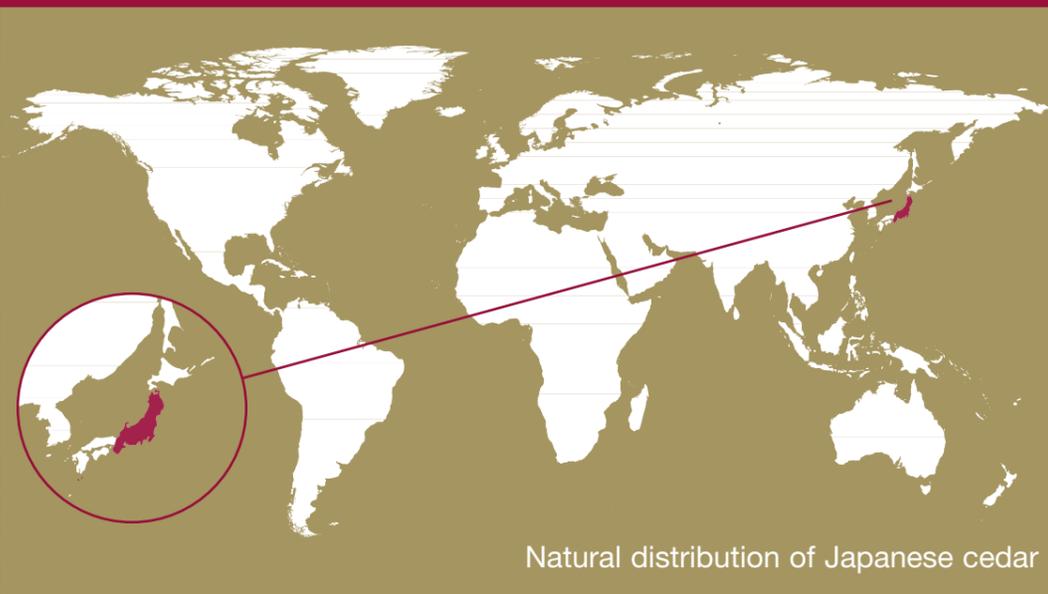


Japanese cedar *Cryptomeria japonica*



Japanese cedar is considered to be a sacred tree in its native Japan and is commonly planted around temples. These huge specimens line the path to a shrine.



Natural distribution of Japanese cedar



The distinctive cones of this tree have spikes on every scale and the branchlets stick out all the way round the branches, rather than on a flat plane.

illustration by John White

This is the national tree of Japan.

The Japanese consider this tree's pink timber to be very valuable because it is light and resistant to rot. They use it to build a range of things including bridges, buildings and ships. Strangely enough, the timber is very uncommon in the UK although climate change could alter this in future. Over here the tree is much more common in parks and gardens.

Sadly, its popularity as a timber tree means that the Japanese cedar is under threat in the wild. We're planning to work with partner organisations to preserve as much generic variation as possible by collecting seed from wild trees. Some of the seed will be stored in the Millennium Seed Bank at Wakehurst Place. The rest will be used to grow a 'living gene bank' of new trees that can restock the wild population if needed. We will also monitor threats to this beautiful tree through the IUCN (the World Conservation Union) Conifer Specialist Group.

Did you know?

Japanese cedar timber turns dark green when it is buried in the ground. The Japanese regard this green wood as being very precious and use it to decorate objects such as cabinets.

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