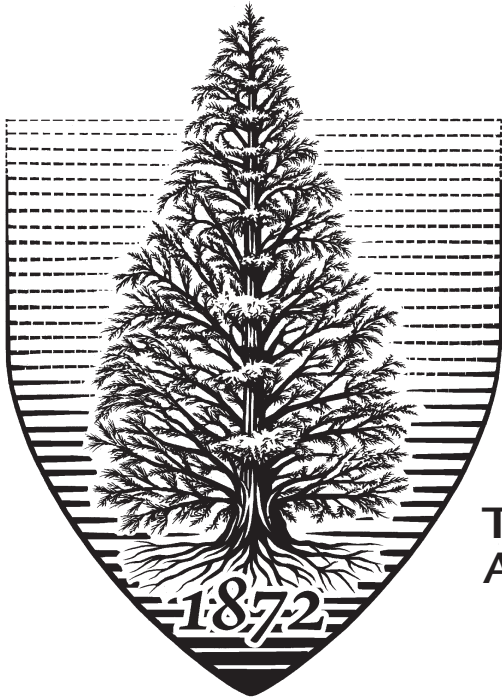


Dawn Redwood

Metasequoia glyptostroboides



The story behind the tree on the
Arnold Arboretum logo

A tree almost as old as the dinosaurs

Metasequoia grew on earth more than 55 million years ago. Paleobotanists (scientists who study ancient and extinct plant life) believed this plant to be extinct. The only evidence ever found of *Metasequoia* was fossils that dated back millions of years. These fossils were discovered in both Asia and North America.

In 1941, a Chinese botanist exploring the interior of his country noticed a large tree in a remote village with a small shrine at its base. The villagers worshiped a god they believed lived inside the tree, and the botanist realized the tree was something special. Scientists around the world examined samples from the tree and confirmed that it was the *Metasequoia* that had previously only been known by the fossils.

Seeds were collected on later expeditions and a large grove of Dawn Redwoods was discovered deep in an isolated valley. The Arboretum was the first North American institution to receive these seeds and was instrumental in distributing them to botanical gardens and universities around the world.



The **ARNOLD**
ARBORETUM
of HARVARD UNIVERSITY

125 Arborway
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
617-384-5209

www.arboretum.harvard.edu

What's in a name?

Try to pronounce it: met-uh-seh-KWOY-uh glip-toe-stroe-BOY-deez

The word *Metasequoia* comes from the Greek and means “looks like a *Sequoia*” and *glyptostrobus* is another rare Chinese conifer with similar looking foliage (the word means “carved cone”).

There does not seem to be any record of when or where the common name was arrived at but it would be a fair guess that “dawn” came from it being a fossil from the dawn of time.

The other redwoods are native to the western United States: *Sequoia sempervirens* (coast redwood) and *Sequoiadendron giganteum* (giant sequoia).

Not all conifers are evergreen

Metasequoia is a deciduous conifer. This means that unlike most cone-bearing trees, the needles change color and drop off in autumn. Other deciduous conifers are *Larix* (larch) and *Taxodium* (baldcypress).

Metasequoia will become very large. Estimations of a mature tree growing in the United States is 100' tall and at least 40' wide. It is a relatively fast grower and can grow as much as three feet a year when growing conditions are favorable. The tallest *Metasequoia* in China is 120 feet tall.

Letterboxing!

Letterboxing is a fun way to explore *Metasequoia* at the Arboretum. During the month of November the trees will be at several stages of color change and needle drop. When the needles have fallen from the tree, the buttressed trunk is more noticeable. For more information on letterboxing, go to www.letterboxing.org.

To find the letterbox, follow these directions:

Go to the start of Conifer Path off of Valley Road.

Walk up Conifer Path until you reach the black trash can and green bench on the right side of the path.

From the bench, take another 68 paces up the path.

On your left will be a contorted tree with a trunk label identifying the Japanese Black Pine. Turn left at this tree.

Go past two pine trees and then you will reach a large tree with six trunks — this is an unusual *Metasequoia*.

Look in between the trunks and you will find the letterbox.

Follow the directions inside and please leave everything as you found it.

Use this space for the letterboxing stamp.