

Save the Trees Please – Especially the State Tree of Louisiana

The cypress tree is a long-lived wetland species that grows along rivers, streams and creeks as well as in swamps with slow moving water. It can live as long as 600 years old. It is a legendary tree of the Deep South known for its "knees," moss-draped crown, and buttressed trunk.

Because of the unique shape of the base of each trunk, artists have created clocks, furniture, and wall décor from the cross-sections of this tree. In the landscaping industry, the cypress is planted for its ornamental beauty. Older cypress trees are especially desired in the timber industry because they are durable and resistant to rot. However, lumber use has declined because it is a slow-growing tree, it is harvested from wetlands, and the population of mature trees is much smaller than in the past.

1. The cypress is a wetland species that grows along rivers, streams and creeks as well as in swamps with slow moving water.
 - True
 - False

2. Older cypress trees produce “elbows,” protrusions that rise above the water level and helps to stabilize the tree in the soft soil and supplying oxygen to the roots.
 - True
 - False

3. Cypress trees can live to be as old as 600 years old, which means some could have been here when Columbus made his first trip to the New World.
 - True
 - False

4. Even though they can be old, cypress trees are small.
 - True
 - False

5. Protection of cypress forests requires limiting logging and prohibiting development activities in these wetlands.
 - True
 - False

6. The inside of the cypress trunk produces wood known as “heartwood” which is highly prized for its rubbery texture and ability to produce syrup.
 - True
 - False

7. Cypress forests naturally filter pollutants and excess nutrients before they contaminate swimming and fishing areas.
 - True

- False

8. Cypress trees grow slowly, and because of over-harvesting of mature trees, there are fewer cypress forests than in the past.

- True
- False

9. Cypress trees provide habitat for a variety of animals, such as migratory songbirds, ducks, herons and even the ivory-billed woodpecker, recently believed to be extinct.

- True
- False

10. Many animals find shelter in and around the base of large old-growth trees.

- True
- False

11. Most bald cypress forests were decimated by 1930. What remains today was either too remote or too young at the time to be sawed into planks, the best of which were often five feet wide.

- True
- False

12. The loss of cypress trees upsets the whole ecosystem, turning swamps into inhospitable marshes.

- True
- False

13. When they are cut down, cypress forests throughout Louisiana will regenerate even in the face of major changes in water levels.

- True
- False

14. The cypress swamps are part of Louisiana's national image and support our economy through eco-tourism, including bird watching, swamp tours, wildlife photography and outdoor recreation including fishing, boating and camping.

- True
- False

15. Cypress forests provide critical protection for coastal communities by protecting them from the worst of hurricane and tidal storm surges.

- True
- False

1. True.
2. False. The protrusions are called "knees."

3. True.
4. False. Cypress trees are big and can grow to more than 150 feet tall. They can have trunks wider than six feet.
5. True.
6. False. Heartwood is prized for its strength and durability, as well as its resistance to rot.
7. True.
8. True.
9. True.
10. True.
11. True.
12. True.
13. False. Cypress trees need protection from pollution, logging and loss of habitat due to man.
14. True.
15. True.