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About the Institute

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY

DIVISION OF
FOREST PATHOLOGY
446 PHELAN BUILDING
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

San Francisco, California
April 3, 1941

Dr. Wilson Popence,
United Fruit Company,
La Lima, Honduras.

Dear Dr. Popence:

I have recently read with much interest your article on "Cupressus Benthami: A neglected opportunity?" in the March 1 number of Tropical Woods.

In recent years our San Francisco Branch has had more than ordinary interest in the genus Cupressus because of a bark disease caused by the fungus Coryneum cardinale that has been causing the death of many thousands of Monterey cypress and to a lesser extent of the columnar form of Italian cypress in California. Some five years ago I received the impression from a note appended to the translation of a French paper on the genus Cupresses appearing in Mexico Forestal that there were two forms in Mexico; one, designated locally as C. thurifera, being valuable as a shade, ornamental and hedge tree while the other was relatively valueless. Through the Sociedad Forestal Mexicana seed of the thurifera form was obtained but the young trees raised from this seed appear to me to be no different than C. benthami or lusitanica. We have a number growing in a field test plot to determine the relative resistance, under field conditions, of the various species and races of Cupressus represented in it to the cypress canker.

You may be interested in knowing that while the young C. benthami trees with us appear to be almost as rapid in growth as the Monterey cypress (C. macrocarpa) and have as yet shown no susceptibility to the cypress canker they are not as drought resistant as our native cypresses and are very susceptible to attack by the cypress bark beetles, Phloeosinus cristatus and P. cupressi, especially as regards the twig pruning habit of these beetles. Accordingly the species would appear to have no particular utility in California.

I would be interested in learning whether you consider that there is more than one distinct form of C. benthami in Mexico and

Central America or whether more than one species may be present,
aside from those occurring in Baja California.

Very truly yours,

Willis W. Wagener

WILLIS W. WAGENER ,
Senior Pathologist.

Magdalena Fruit Co.,
Santa Marta, Colombia,
1 June 1941

Mr Willis M Wagener,
U S Dept of Agriculture,
446 Phelan Bldg, San Francisco, Calif.

Dear Mr Wagener:

Your interesting letter of 3 April, regarding Cupressus benthami, has caught up with me. I am very glad indeed to learn of your experience with this species in my home state, California, even though you are not much encouraged by its behavior. It is particularly interesting to know that the growth rate as proved to be about the same as that of C. macrocarpa. I have often thought of the latter as a good candidate for reforestation work in tropical highlands and I am surprised that it has not been tested more widely down here. Perhaps it has been planted more frequently than I think. After all, I know nothing about forestry, my field being horticulture.

Paul Standley can give a better opinion than myself regarding the possibility that there is more than one form of C. benthami in Mexico and Central America, or whether more than one species may be present. I do not know Mexico very well; but in Central America I strongly suspect there is only one form and no other species. There seems to have been a good deal of confusion in the literature regarding the identity of our Central American plant. But so far as I have observed it, it is one and the same thing throughout Central America. And I rather think Standley feels the same way about it.

Sincerely yours,

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446 PHELAN BUILDING
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

San Francisco, California
July 8, 1941

Dr. Wilson Popenoe
Magdalena Fruit Company
Santa Marta, Colombia

Dear Dr. Popenoe:

Your kind letter of June 1 in reply to mine concerning Cupressus benthami arrived just as I was returning from a six weeks absence in Washington and I am only now beginning to catch up in correspondence. Please accept my thanks for your opinion concerning the species in Central America, based on your observations of the tree there. Following your suggestion I will write Dr. Standley for his opinion concerning the possible existence of two forms in Mexico proper.

I feel that Cupressus macrocarpa might have a very definite place in reforestation in tropical highlands as you suggest, on account of its rapid growth and its adaptability to soil conditions. It can apparently stand almost anything except waterlogged soils. However there would be the danger that the cypress canker fungus or some of the insect pests might be introduced, and under new environments these pests sometimes raise havoc as you know. The cypress canker is ruinous here and we do not know whether it is an introduced fungus or an obscure unknown native one that has gone over to the species when the latter became planted far outside its native range below Monterey Bay.

If the species was tried for reforestation in the tropical Americas it would be important to start with the right form. There is quite a lot of variation in the species even though most of the trees here are similar in habit. In England, however, most plantings of the species show a more erect habit and a much less pronounced tendency to develop strong side branches according to T. R. Peace. He was much surprised at the appearance of the trees, especially in plantations, in California. He considers that the difference may be owing in part to the difference in light under average English conditions but very likely also to differences in form probably present in the original seedlings raised in England and the perpetuation of erect types through selection, deliberate or otherwise.

Older trees of Cupressus macrocarpa here suffer from a heart rot caused by Polyporus basilaris but this would no doubt be avoided in plantings in a new country.

Sincerely,

Willis W. Wagener

WILLIS W. WAGENER
Senior Pathologist

Dr. Wilson Popenoe
7/8/41

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