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## Dawn Redwood - Frost Resistant

*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*

### The rediscovered fossil

**Worth Knowing:** The Dawn Redwood is a summer-green tree that grows up to 30 meters, in its natural habitat even up to 50 meters. Its base appears to be strongly broadened. Young trees build up a pyramidal crown that grows wider and more blunt in older Redwoods. The bark of a young plant has a reddish-brown colour while the trunk of a matured tree is grey-brown coloured. During winter the Dawn Redwood casts the needles as well as the short sprouts. Through fossil finds there were 10 known species of its genus from the Cretaceous age. They were widely spread across the northern hemisphere, but only the Dawn Redwood survived, even though it also was thought to be extinct and could only be described from fossilization. However, in 1948 it was rediscovered in China as a living specimen.

**Natural Location:** In its natural habitat it is mostly found near creeks and riverbanks as well as in humid canyons, but there are only small relic populations in China. However, since its rediscovery the Dawn Redwood is being cultivated as a decorative tree in parks worldwide.

**Cultivation:** Dawn Redwood trees can be multiplied through cuttings, which is basically done in the forestry. Seed propagation indoors is also possible throughout the year. It is advisable to stratify the seeds first, which means to stimulate and prepare the seed with a cold treatment. For that you have to keep it sealed in a plastic bag in the regular refrigerator for about one week. After that, place the seeds for another two days in warm water for priming, so that the swelling further increases its germinability. Now you can gently press the seeds into moist potting compost. As a light germinator the Dawn Redwood seeds need only a very thin layer of compost earth on top. Cover the seed container with clear film to prevent the earth from drying out, but don't forget to make some holes in the clear film and take it every second or third day completely off for about 2 hours. That way you avoid mold formation on your potting compost. Place the seed container somewhere bright and warm with a temperature between 15°C and 20° Celsius and keep the earth moist, but not wet. You may need a little bit of patience with the germination, but within three to six weeks the first seedlings should come up.

**Place:** Be aware that the Dawn Redwood will become a tall tree over the years, so choose wisely a full sunny spot for planting outdoors.

**Care:** See that your Dawn Redwood gets sufficient water during the dry summer. That is also to say for older trees since it is not very deep rooted. Once a week, younger plants can also be dipped in a bigger container with water until the clotted roots are soaked. Fertilizing is usually not necessary.

**During the winter:** During autumn the needles will change their colouring from rose and yellow colours to red and copper-brown in November. The tree will then cast the needles as well as the short sprouts, before it sprouts again in spring. The Dawn Redwood is frost-resistant up to -32 °C; however, it can be sensitive to late frosts. Only after the trunk is lignified at its lower end up to 10 or 15 cm, it is sufficiently frost-resistant to be planted outdoors. For the first three years, the Dawn Redwood should therefore be kept in a tub and has to be watered moderately during winter. Ideally you keep it away from the dry air of a heater to prevent pest infestation. For its first winter outdoors, the tree should be given some protection for the root area, for example a layer of brushwood.