

Dawn Redwood

Dawn redwood is the common name for the species *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* native to China. Like other redwoods, it grows to extremely tall heights, of at least 50 meters, and produces coniferous green needles and small round cones. However, unlike other true redwoods, dawn redwoods are unique in that they are deciduous: in the fall, their needles turn brown and are shed.



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History

Up until the 1940's dawn redwood, like all other species within the *Metasequoia* genus, was thought to be extinct, present only within the fossil record. However, in 1943, a Chinese botanist discovered a living specimen in the village of Modaoxi, located in present day Lichuan County in China's Central Hubei province. Samples were collected from this tree that was also highly revered by the villagers, and 5 years later, a paper was published announcing the identification of a new species. This paper then caught the eye of botanists from Harvard University, who subsequently travelled to China themselves to study the tree, and they eventually ended up collecting seeds of the dawn redwood and distributing it to universities and arboreta around the world for further study and to ensure continuance of the species. Today, as the only living species of the *Metasequoia* genus, the dawn redwood is what botanists refer to as a "living fossil". And while dawn redwood becomes increasingly rare to spot in the wild in its native China, it's a popular ornamental tree found in cities, parks and campuses around the world, as well as a favourite amongst practitioners of penjing and bonsai, the art of creating miniature potted landscapes.



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