

Taxus baccata

Common Yew / English Yew

December 2011



Taxus baccata clipped cones

Taxus baccata is a medium sized, evergreen conifer, native to Britain, much of Europe and parts of Asia and Africa. It is tolerant of a wide range of growing conditions including shade and chalk but not waterlogged or poor draining soil. It is widely used in landscaping as its relatively slow growth and tolerance of pruning make it an ideal plant for hedging and topiary.

Bright red, berry like fruits ripen in the autumn and are attractive to birds during the winter. Most parts of the plant are toxic, particularly if foliage is eaten by animals. Fatal poisoning is uncommon in humans though unless excess volumes of foliage are consumed!

Taxus baccata is the longest living plant in Europe with estimated ages between 2000 and 4000 years. However, no one can determine the exact ages as the trunk hollows with age, making a ring count impossible. This does not make the plant unstable though as once it reaches a certain size, new shoots appear at the base and grow, fusing into the main trunk and acting like buttresses.

Plant Profile

Name: *Taxus baccata*

Common Name: Common, English or European Yew

Family: Taxaceae

Height: 10-20m

Demands: Tolerant of most conditions and soil types as long as well drained

Foliage: Needles are lanceolate, flat and dark green

Bark: Reddish-brown, flaking in small pieces


Fruit: Seeds are surrounded by a red, berry-like fruit.



Taxus baccata 2m plants

Taxus baccata

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 Deepdale
The name *Taxus* possibly comes from the Greek word 'taxon' meaning 'bow' and *baccata* from the Latin 'bacca' meaning 'berry'.



Red, berry like aril



3m clipped hedging units



Taxus clipped balls



Taxus in various forms



Flaking bark