

THE BIG TREES OF MICHIGAN
24. *Taxodium distichum* (L.) Richard
Bald Cypress

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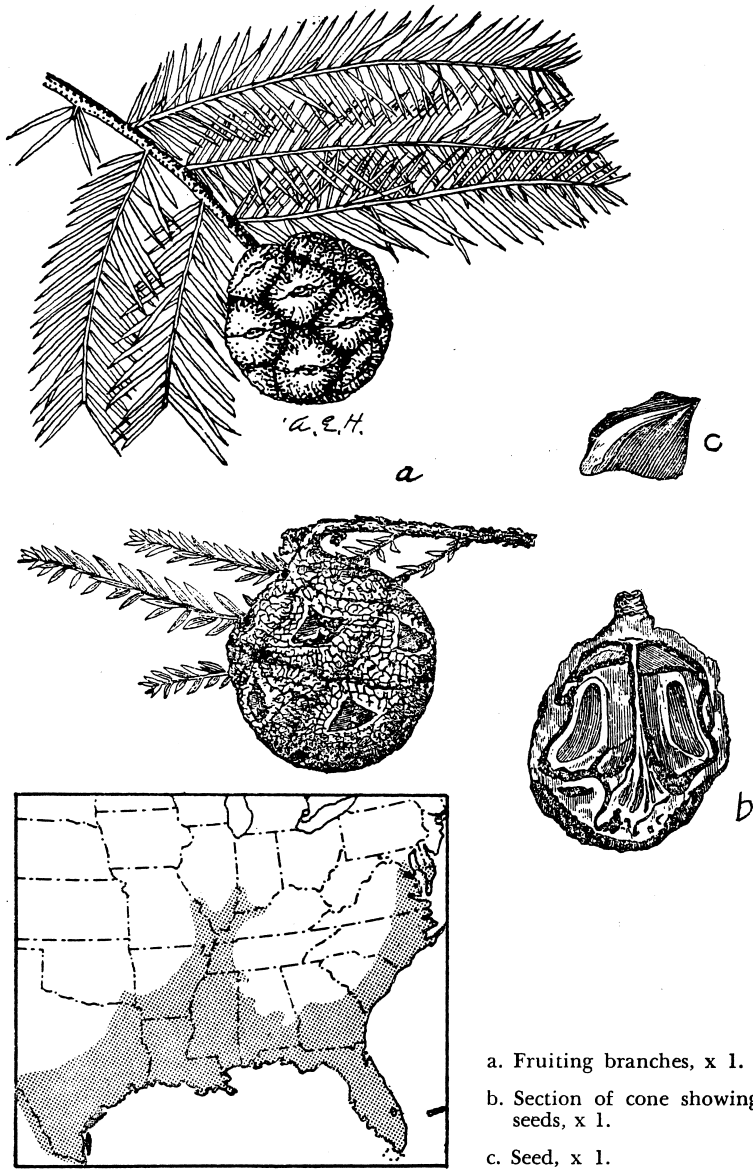
The largest known Bald Cypress in Michigan is located in the Kleinstuck Preserve in Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo County, Michigan, in the southwest portion of the lower peninsula.

Description of the species: The Bald Cypress is a member of the family Taxodiaceae, along with the Sequoias. (Modern opinion mostly favors merging the Taxodiaceae into the Cupressaceae, as was done in volume 2 of *Flora of North America*, 1993.) The genus *Taxodium* is distinguished from other members of the family by its flattened, deciduous needles (Fig. 1). The leaves are two-ranked, and many times, entire leafy branchlets are shed as a unit. The seeds are three-angled and there are two seeds borne on the upper surface of each cone scale. *Taxodium distichum* is predominantly southeastern in its distribution, but extends west to Texas and Mexico, and north as far as Maryland and Long Island, NY, and it reaches the lower Ohio River and even grows along the Wabash River on the Illinois-Indiana border.

The Michigan State Champion Bald Cypress was planted around 1855 by Carl G. Kleinstuck when the area was known as Bragg's Nursery. The tree is, therefore, about 145 years old.

Location of Michigan's Big Tree: Michigan's largest known Bald Cypress can be found in the city of Kalamazoo. The tree can be reached by taking Maple St. to Stearns Ave., about 100 yards past the YMCA. Take Stearns Ave. one block to its end at the entrance to the Kleinstuck Preserve. Follow the trail from the end of Stearns Ave. a short distance over a hill and through a 1940s pine plantation. Follow the trail down a clope to the circle trail that goes around the wet depression in the center of the preserve. Take the trail to the right a short distance around the north side of the wet depression. The trail passes over a drainage ditch about 25 yds. before the tree. The tree is easily visible, and is 3 yds. off the south side of the trail. The map coordinates for this location are T2S, R11W, section 28.

Description of Michigan's Big Tree: The tree has a healthy, solid trunk. One branch emerges about 5' from the ground; under the branch there is a woodpecker hole. The circumference of the tree at breast height was measured on 12



a. Fruiting branches, x 1.
b. Section of cone showing two seeds, x 1.
c. Seed, x 1.

FIGURE 1. Characteristics of the Bald Cypress. The illustration is reproduced from Preston, 1976, p. 92, and used with permission.

April 1996 by D. Dehn, E. Ehrle, and A. Goddard at 116'' (295 cm). The crown spread was measured at 31' (10 m). The height was measured at 68' (21 m).

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

If you would like to join us in extending this series of articles by visiting and describing one or more of Michigan's Big Trees, please contact Elwood B. Ehrle for help with locations, specifications for taking measurements, and assistance with the manuscript. The Michigan Botanical Club encourages your involvement in this activity. Please remember to ask permission before entering private property.

DEDICATION

This series of articles is dedicated to the memory of Paul Thompson, Michigan's Big Tree Coordinator for over 40 years, who died in 1994.

LITERATURE CITED

Preston, Richard J. 1976. North American Trees. Iowa State University Press, xxix + 399 pp. Ames, Iowa.