

## Myths About Cypress Mulch

### "It's insect resistant."

There is no scientific evidence that cypress mulch is resistant to termites and other insects. What's more, grade-A pine bark does not have live organic matter and so provides nothing in which insects can nest.

### "It's more durable."

This may have been true about the byproducts of old-growth trees. Today, very young tender growth is the target. Mulch from this source is no more durable than pine bark, because it takes many years for cypress to gain its full strength.

### "It's more float resistant."

People think that pine bark and other materials will float in heavy rains and cypress mulch won't. If you use a solid base, neither will float away.

### "It's more aromatic and weed resistant."

All mulches have aromatic compounds that resist weed-seed germination. Pine straw can suppress weeds for up to one year, but cypress mulch and others work only *two or three months!*

The cypress is our *Louisiana State Tree* – and the key to restoring our wetlands. In addition to the habitat they offer, our wetlands provide natural filters that clean our waterways and serve as catch-basins during high water. And, *they even act as a buffer against tidal surges during storms!*

If we have any hope for saving our wetlands, we *must* start with our cypress trees.

### *Join us today to save our heritage!*

We are *your* Baton Rouge Group of the Sierra Club, serving East and West Baton Rouge, Ascension, Livingston, Iberville, and East and West Feliciana Parishes, and we need your help.

On the Internet, you can find us at:  
<http://batonrouge.sierraclub.org>

Or, call our  
Group Chair at 225-381-9440 for more  
information.



## Don't Let Our Cypress Trees Become Another Louisiana Ghost Legend



## **Using cypress mulch in your garden is killing our cypress forests!**

Early in the last century, logging was a major industry throughout the state. By the 1920's, clear-cutting had eliminated virtually all of the old-growth areas. What had once been stands of trees that were hundreds of years old had become flat treeless marshes. In addition to lost habitats, these changes also cost us wetlands and other buffer areas that protect us from storms.

In recent years, many of these tracts have been slowly recovering, some due to natural reforestation, others due to replanting and protection. But, today, environmentalists see the cypress-mulch industry as both a serious threat to these rejuvenating habitats and a return to a perspective almost a century out of date. These harvesters move through marshes and wetlands, grinding up acres of cypress for packaging and distribution as home-garden mulch. After years of debate (and increased resistance) in the State of Florida, the industry is moving to Louisiana. A recent application by an out-of-state company for areas of Lake Maurepas shoreline brought these issues home.

So little time has passed since these areas were clear-cut that they have not had an opportunity to recover; harvesting now is cutting short the habitat's chance to rebuild. People think cypress mulch is an effective use of lumber byproducts, when the reality is that *whole trees* – some as small as three inches in diameter – are being ground up for bedding materials.

What's more, buyers are especially attracted to cypress mulch, because of the tree's reputation for resistance to weather and insects. However, the characteristics that provide this protection exist only in older trees, and trees harvested today are too young for this to work. Further, the small chips necessary for garden mulch dilute the chemistry to a point where there is very little advantage over other materials.

Finally, local horticulturists advise that many of the garden plants and shrubs most popular in Louisiana actually do better with pine-bark and pine-straw mulch.

Since the cypress-mulch industry is ultimately driven by consumer use of its product, the Sierra Club, in conjunction with other environmental organizations, has begun a campaign to educate gardeners about their options and the impacts of their choices.

Local governments have adopted resolutions prohibiting the use of cypress mulch on their grounds. Here, in Baton Rouge, local officials use "*whole tree*" mulch – *not cypress* mulch.

Now the emphasis is moving to individual consumers. *Will you join this grassroots effort to save Louisiana's State Tree?*



**Cypress is a valuable part of our habitat.**



**Cypress wetlands help to clean pollutants from our water.**



**Cypress trees were here when Jefferson signed the Louisiana Purchase.**

Now, at the bicentennial, let's not be the generation that killed off these trees.

### **What can you do?**

- **Use alternatives that help our economy.** Pine bark and pine straw from our local forestry industry make excellent mulch.

- **Try your own leaves and pine straw** Leaves and straw from your yard or compost are usually the best possible choices for our local plants and shrubs. *And, using them saves money!*

- **Talk to your friends and neighbors** Most people just don't know about this problem. Help us spread the word.

- **Join us!** There's contact information on the reverse side of this pamphlet. Together, we can make a difference!