

PACIFIC YEWE



Does medicine grow on trees? Yes! Of the medicines we use today, 70% are derived from natural sources and at least 40% come from plants. While many of the world's estimated 70,000 medicinal plant species are threatened by habitat loss and over-harvesting, botanical gardens and arboreta are working together to conserve these plants in living collections and support conservation efforts in the wild.

Pacific yew (*Taxus brevifolia*) grows in the shadow of towering Douglas-firs and western redcedars in the Pacific temperate rainforest. But Pacific yew is a giant in its own right. **Its bark contains paclitaxel, also known as taxol, an important tool in the fight against cancer.** High demand for this chemotherapy drug led to overharvesting and was threatening Pacific yew, but scientists learned to synthesize paclitaxel in the lab so now wild populations can recover.

A conifer without cones, Pacific yew has seeds surrounded by juicy red arils that attract birds who eat and disperse them. But don't add these to your next smoothie! Except for the aril itself, the entire plant is poisonous.

Yew Family – Taxaceae | Conservation status: Near Threatened



Pacific yew seeds are enjoyed by birds



Pacific yew habitat, temperate rainforest, Pacific Rim National Park, British Columbia.