



By Barbara Elmore, HCMG

## Tall Trees of Cibolo National Forest



We all giggled when our friend, trying out her new camcorder, recorded the scene enveloping us at the "Cibolo National Forest." It was a slip of the tongue prompted by a hike in the heat of the afternoon sun at Cibolo Nature Center in

But any of us could have made the mistake. Part of the beauty of the nature center ([www.cibolo.org](http://www.cibolo.org)) and its trails are the tall cypress trees that reduce people to antlike height in photographs. We were in the riparian forest portion of the nature trail, and it does resemble a national forest. And it's not inaccurate to call the cypress a national tree. According to the Arbor Day Foundation website ([www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org)), bald cypress trees are native "from Maryland along the eastern coast to Texas and as far west as the Mississippi valley."

More to the point, if you are interested in seeing different kinds of native Texas trees and ecosystems, put a trip to the nature center on your list of things to do. And if you are researching trees appropriate for your landscape, you might be interested to know that you don't have to live on a river or creek bank to grow cypress trees. However, want to look at your lot size and purpose of the tree before deciding whether the bald cypress will work for you. The mature bald cypress will grow 50 to 70 feet tall.

Here a few facts about the bald cypress, courtesy of Jan Wrede's book *Trees, Shrubs and Vines of the Texas Hill Country*:

- They are old. She notes that they were cut from Hill Country rivers and creeks to make the old homes and barns of the area that still stand.
- The wood is not very strong but is rot resistant, one of the reasons it was used in home construction.
- They grow fast and are desirable ornamental trees if they get enough water.

Another idea for tree shoppers is to check out the shopping portion of Arbor Day Foundation website. Fun-to-use features provide a list of the 10 most popular trees for Zone 8 (Fredericksburg, Kerrville, and other parts of Texas) and a second list of the trees that grow well in Zone 8.



Take some time if you go to list Number 2. The trees that grow well in our area start with glossy abelia and finish with a Japanese zelkova. The list covers almost 30 web pages. But the variety and the online shopping options can broaden your planting perspective. For example, the tree-shopping portion of the website allows you to put the type of trees you are interested in from evergreen to shrubs; your soil type and the sun exposure your tree might receive; and certain specifications such as height, spread and growth rate.

Happy shopping! And if you want to see some real trees, visit Cibolo Nature Center.