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Pacific Silver Fir in the Coast Range of Southwestern Washington

Abstract

Abies amabilis occurs on the summit of prominent ridges and peaks from 1200 to 2800 ft elevation and at the head of major drainages in the Coast Range of Southwestern Washington.

Discussion

The distribution of Pacific silver fir (*Abies amabilis*) in the Coast Range of southwestern Washington is not well known. Range maps fail to show the occurrence of this species in the Coast Range south of the Olympic Mountains (Little, 1971). Other references state that Pacific silver fir in Washington is found on the west slopes of the Cascades and in the Olympic Mountains, but omit mention of this species in the Coast Range of southwestern Washington (Fowells, 1965; Franklin and Dyrness, 1973; Hitchcock *et al.*, 1969).

Pacific silver fir is found in the Willapa Hills of Wahkiakum, Pacific, and Lewis Counties, the Doty Hills of Lewis County, and the Black Hills of Thurston County. Northwest of the Doty Hills, it is found in the vicinity of Pack Sack in Pacific County, and on Blue Mountain and Minot Peak in Grays Harbor County. This species occurs on the summit of prominent ridges and peaks from 1200 to 2800 ft elevation and at the head of major drainages, but is absent from the summit and immediate slopes of Boistfort Peak, at 3110 ft elevation, the highest point in the Willapa Hills. Locations where Pacific silver fir is found receive over 60 in annual precipitation and during the summer are frequently covered by low clouds that extend inland from the nearby Pacific Ocean; these clouds help maintain a cooler, moister climate than that found in the adjacent lowlands.

Pacific silver fir in this region is commonly associated with western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*). Less common associates are Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) and an occasional Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*). Understory vegetation is similar to that described for the *Abies amabilis* Zone in the northern Oregon Coast Range and in the Olympic Mountains (Franklin and Dyrness, 1973).

Most mature stands of Pacific silver fir in the Coast Range of southwestern Washington have been harvested. Although many of the clearcut areas have regenerated with other conifers, immature Pacific silver fir can be found.

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