



Chinese Juniper *Juniperus chinensis*

Alex X. Niemiera, Professor, School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, Virginia Tech

Summary:

Foliage: Juvenile (sharp awl-like needles); adult (scale-like); both can be present or some cultivars only have one foliage type (juvenile or adult); evergreen

Height: Depends on cultivar

Spread: Depends on cultivar

Shape: Depends on cultivar

Main features: Chinese juniper, the species, is a medium/large tree, however, only cultivars, ranging from small trees/large shrubs to low-growing shrubs are sold at garden centers. Cultivars serve a number of functions depending on size and form. In general, Chinese junipers are “work horses” in landscapes since they are relatively tough (tolerate adverse conditions), serve as ground covers, barriers, hedges and foundation plants, are used in mass, and in a few cases can be a specimen plant (used alone as a focal point due to attractive features). Due to the great range in heights and forms among cultivars, individual cultivars will be described.

Plant Needs:

Zone: 4 to 9 depending on cultivar

Light: Full sun

Moisture: Average to dry

Soil type: Adaptable to most soils except poorly drained soils

pH range: Acid to alkaline

Functions:

Chinese junipers cultivars can serve as ground covers, barriers, hedges and foundation plants, are used in mass, and in a few cases can be a specimen plant (used alone as a focal point due to attractive features).

Care:

No special care is needed. To reduce the need for pruning, one should choose the cultivar that has a size and form that best meets the particular landscape need. There are relatively harmful foliage diseases that can be very problematic in cool wet spring weather; these are *Phomopsis* and *Kabatina* blights. Since these diseases are cultivar specific, one should consult the following web site for information on cultivar susceptibility or resistance to these blights:

<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/450/450-601/450-601.html>.

Additional Information:

There are numerous cultivars in the trade that range in size from 3 to 20 feet tall, and that range in form from low-growing ground covers to narrow conical tree forms. Here is a list of some of the popular ones:

'Ames' a spreading shrub form that matures into a large conical shrub

'Angelica Blue' wide-spreading shrub to about 6 feet tall; has blue foliage

'Armstrong' wide-spreading dwarf form to about 4 feet tall with scale-like foliage
'Blue Point' dense conical form to about 15 feet tall with tapered apex; blue-green scale-like foliage
'Fruitlandii' low dense compact shrub form to about 3 feet tall
Gold Coast® ('Aurea Improved') dense wide-spreading form to about 3 feet tall with yellow new growth that persist into winter
'Gold Lace' low-growing (to about 4 feet tall) and wide-spreading form with bright yellow foliage
'Hetzi Columnaris' conical form to about 20 feet tall with blue green foliage (juvenile and adult)
'Kaizuka' ('Torulosa') called Hollywood juniper in the trade; large shrub/small tree to about 20 feet tall with ascending twisting branches; has dark green foliage and is tolerant of salt spray
'Nick's Compact' (perhaps same as 'Pfitzeriana Compacta' low-growing flat-topped wide-spreading form; to about 4 feet tall
'Pfitzeriana' ('Pfitzerana' or 'Wilhelm Pfitzer) used in the nursery trade since the late 19th century; tall (to about 15 feet) wide-spreading form
'Pfitzeriana Aurea' wide-spreading form and about 6 feet tall with yellow foliage
'Robusta Green' upright, narrow conical to columnar to irregular branching/tufted columnar form with bright green foliage; to about 15 feet tall
var. *sargentii* (taxonomy is disputed; perhaps a separate species) low-growing to about 2 feet tall and wide-spreading form; a few cultivar of this variety including 'Compacta' with a compact form;
'Glauca' dwarf form to about 1.5 feet tall (better growth habit than 'Compacta') 'Saybrook Gold' 3 feet tall and wide-spreading form with bright yellow foliage

Recent investigation has implicated that Chinese juniper (*Juniper chinensis*) has been a catch all taxonomic classification for a few species. In addition, there have been many natural and human-mediated hybrids between *J. chinensis* and *J. sabina* that have also been listed as Chinese juniper. Future texts may sort this all out but for now Chinese juniper is the species that one finds the traditionally listed forms, regardless of taxonomic correctness.

