

Eastern Redcedar

Juniperus virginiana

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Summary:

Foliage: Scale-like except awl-like when young; evergreen

Height: About 40 feet

Spread: About 15 feet

Shape: Typically narrow conical tree but ranges from conical to columnar (column-like)

Main features: Eastern redcedar is widely distributed throughout the eastern US. It is a pioneer species in that it quickly populates farm fields and other open areas (seeds spread in bird droppings). Its common place presence throughout makes it suffer the stigma of being too familiar. However, this species certainly has a place in our landscapes since there are cultivars that have dark green foliage, showy "fruit", and a variety of forms (see Additional Information section). It is also tolerant of poor dry soils as well as alkaline soils.

Plant Needs:

Zone: 3 to 9

Light: Full sun

Moisture: Average to dry

Soil type: Any type except poorly drained

pH range: Acid to somewhat alkaline

Functions:

Eastern redcedar has numerous landscape functions including specimen plant, in mass, as a hedge and windscreen, in a border, and as foundation plant (shrub forms).

Care:

No special care is needed. This species is very tolerant of pruning (do not cut into wood without foliage).

Additional Information:

Eastern redcedars, like all junipers are dioecious which means that there are separate male and female plants. The silver-gray cones (fleshy coverings on seeds often referred to as juniper "berries") on females are quite attractive in the fall and winter. Male plants can be distinguished from female plants in the late winter because male cones (which bear pollen) are brown and are borne at branch tips giving male plants an overall brownish appearance in late winter. Eastern redcedar is a misnomer since this species is a juniper and not a true cedar; cedars are in the *Cedrus* genus. There is a great amount of variation in this species; plants differ in size, form, foliage color, and fruit characteristics. Selections have been made for these traits and some notable cultivars are:

'Blue Arrow' columnar small tree form with bright blue foliage

'Canaertii' conical tree form with dark green foliage and heavy "fruit" set (female)

'Emerald Sentinel' narrow conical tree form with dark green foliage and abundant fruit set (female)

'Glauca' narrow conical tree form with bluish-green foliage that fades to green during the growing season

'Gray Owl' wide-spreading shrub form (about 4 feet tall and 8 feet wide) with silver-gray foliage and abundant "fruit" (female)

'Hillspire' (perhaps same as 'Cupressifolia') conical tree form with bright green foliage (even in winter)

'Idyllwild' wide conical tree form with dark green foliage

'Taylor' narrow conical to columnar tree form that has the "Italian cypress" look of formality; has blue green foliage

Eastern redcedar is an alternate host for cedar apple rust which is a fungal disease that is harmful to apple trees but has only a minor effect on eastern redcedars. Thus, if one has apple trees, then you will not want to plant eastern redcedars in the vicinity.