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Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ PROGRAM

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Juniperus silicicola: Southern Redcedar[1]

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Introduction

This densely-foliated, wide pyramidal, columnar or oval evergreen grows fairly quickly, ultimately reaching heights up to 40 feet with a 25-foot spread. Some individual plants grow wider than tall as they grow older. Some botanists do not make a distinction between *Juniperus silicicola* and *Juniperus virginiana*. Its fine-textured, medium green leaves, and drooping branchlets help to soften the rather symmetrical, oval juvenile form. Mature specimens of Southern Redcedar take on a flat-topped, almost windswept appearance, making them very picturesque. Bark and trunk on older specimens take on a delightful, 'old-tree' look.

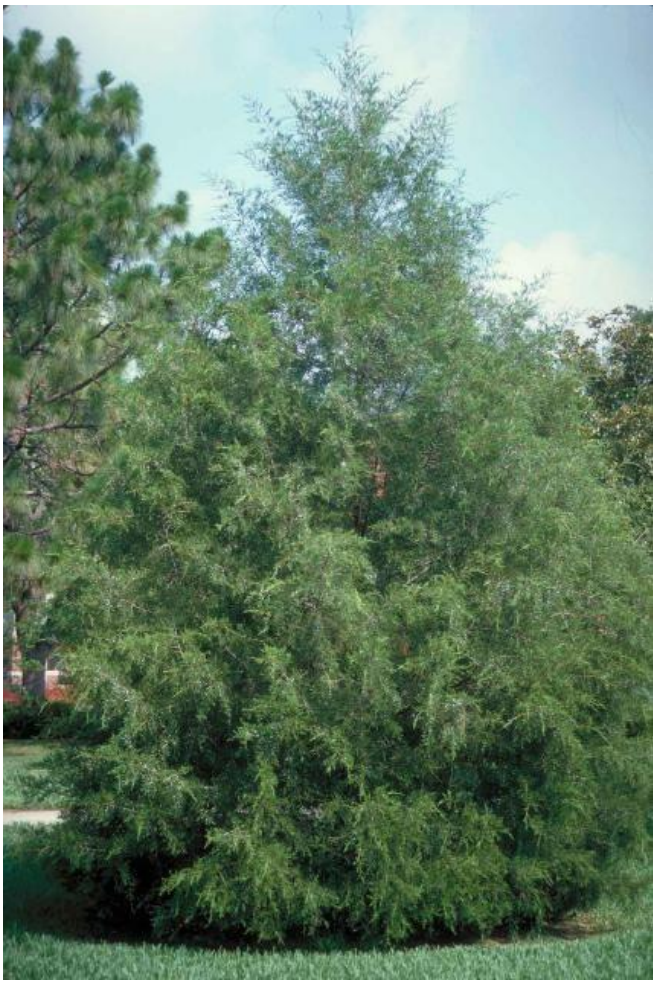

Figure 1. Middle-aged *Juniperus silicicola*: Southern Redcedar
Credit: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Juniperus silicicola*

Pronunciation: joo-NIP-er-us sill-liss-sih-KOLE-uh

Common name(s): Southern Redcedar

Family: *Cupressaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 8A through 10B (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: urban tolerant; screen; street without sidewalk; reclamation; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median; bonsai; Christmas tree

Availability: not native to North America

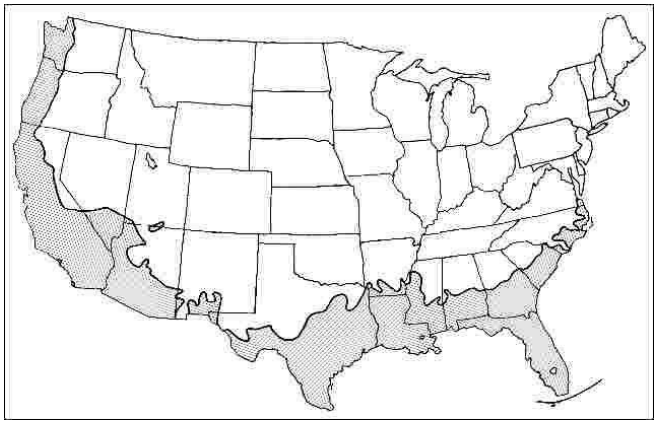

Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 30 to 45 feet

Spread: 20 to 30 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: pyramidal, columnar, oval

Crown density: open

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire, terminal spine

Leaf shape: awl-like, scale-like

Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

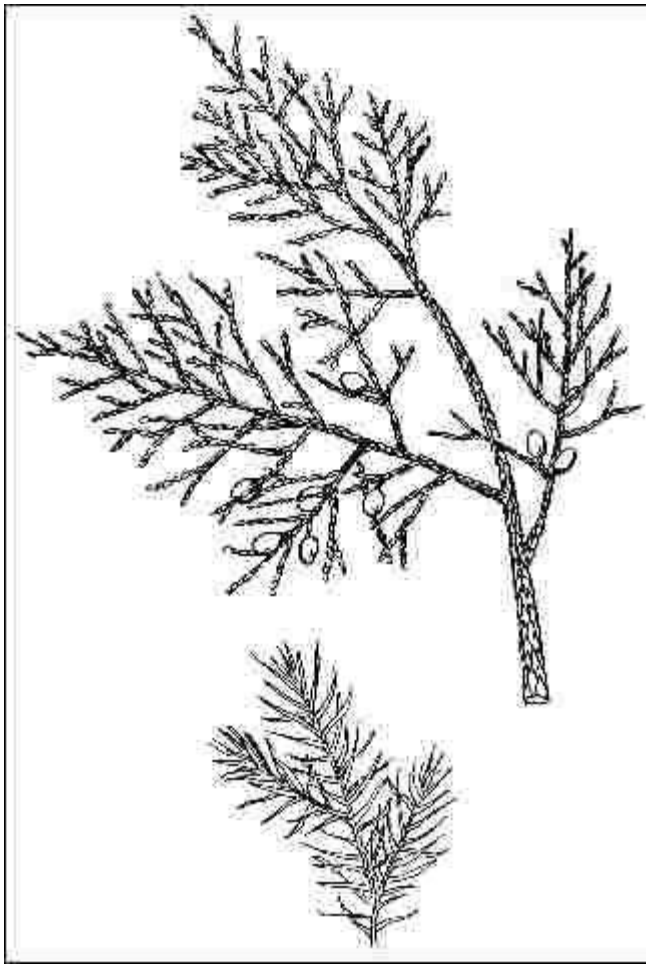

Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: unknown

Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: cone, round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: purple, blue

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; showy; typically one trunk; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: susceptible to breakage

Current year twig color: green, brown

Current year twig thickness: thin

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun, or partial shade

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: high

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

The dense growth and attractive foliage make Southern Redcedar a favorite for windbreaks, screens, and wildlife-cover for large-scale landscapes. Its high salt-tolerance makes it ideal for seaside locations. Redcedar can make a nice Christmas tree, and the fragrant wood is popular for repelling insects. Cedar Key, FL, once had extensive redcedar forests before the lumber was extensively harvested and the wood used for chests and pencils. Although not currently used often as a street tree, its wood is strong, the foliage is clean, and the fruit is small making it a suitable candidate. There are some nice examples of street tree use in southern cities. With proper pruning to remove lower branches, it should adapt well to street-scapes.

Planted in full sun or partial shade, Southern Redcedar will easily grow on a variety of soils, including clay. Growth may be poor in landscapes which are over-irrigated. Plants are difficult to transplant due to a coarse root system, except when quite small. Water until well-established and then forget about the tree. It performs admirably with no care, even on alkaline soil and along the coast. Usually insects and diseases are not a problem if grown in the full sun. There may be local restrictions on planting this tree near apple orchards because it is the alternate host for cedar-apple rust.

Propagation is by seed, which germinate faster if planted as soon as the cones mature or if given a stratification period. Also, tip cuttings can be rooted.

No cultivars are listed but there is ample opportunity to propagate and culture from the wide diversity of shapes and growth habits exhibited by this tree.

Pests

Usually none are serious.

Bagworm caterpillars web foliage and debris together to make bags up to two inches long. The insects live in the bags and emerge to feed on the foliage. Use sprays of *Bacillus thuringiensis*. The insects can also be picked off the plants by hand.

Juniper scale causes yellowed needles, and infected branches fail to produce new growth. The scale is round and at first white, later turning gray or black.

The Juniper webworm webs twigs and needles together, causing them to brown and die. The larva is 1/2-inch-long and is brown with darker stripes. The larvae are often in the densest part of the plant and can go unnoticed.

Mites cause stippled and bronzed foliage.

Diseases

Twig blights cause death and browning of twigs tips. The diseases may progress down the stem killing the whole branch. Small lesions may be seen at the base of dead tissue. Prune out dead branch tips. Dieback from Kabatina blight appears in early spring, from Phomopsis in summer.

Three rust diseases seen most often are cedar-apple rust, hawthorn rust, and quince rust. The most common is cedar-apple rust. On Juniper the disease forms galls and orange jelly-like horns in spring. The horns are most likely to form following periods of rainy, warm weather. Spores formed in the horns infect the alternate host. The diseases are more serious on the alternate host than Juniper. A separation of a few hundred yards may help avoid the disease. Prune out the spore horns when seen in the spring.

Junipers are not tolerant of ice coatings. Expect dieback when Junipers are covered with ice for several days. Removing the ice is impractical.

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