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Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ PROGRAM

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Juniperus virginiana 'Skyrocket': 'Skyrocket' Eastern Redcedar[1]

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Introduction

This cultivar of redcedar is an evergreen probably growing to about 30 feet tall in a columnar form and spreading only to 6- or 8-feet when given a sunny location. 'Skyrocket' has silver-blue foliage in the spring and summer which develops a brownish tint in winter in the north. The fruit is a blue berry on female trees and is ornamental when produced in quantity. Birds devour the fruit and 'plant' it along farm fences and in old abandoned fields. Some botanists do not separate *Juniperus virginiana* from *Juniperus silicicola*.

General Information

Scientific name: *Juniperus virginiana*

Pronunciation: joo-NIP-er-us ver-jin-ee-AY-nuh

Common name(s): 'Skyrocket' Eastern redcedar

Family: *Cupressaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 3A through 9B (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: urban tolerant; container or planter; screen; specimen; highway median; bonsai

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Juniperus virginiana* 'Skyrocket': 'Skyrocket' Eastern Redcedar
Credit: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS

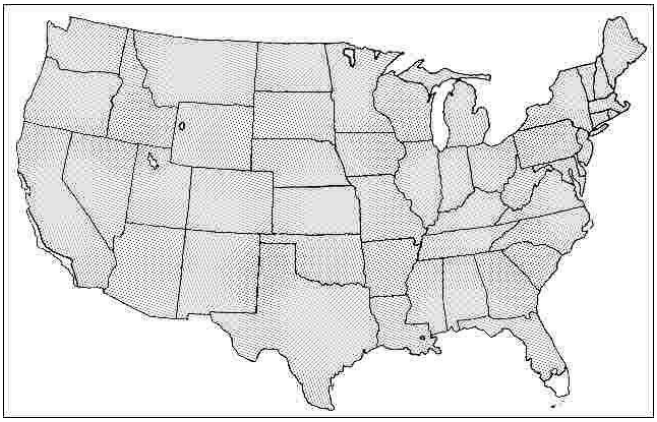

Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 25 to 35 feet

Spread: 6 to 8 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: columnar, upright/erect

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: whorled (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: silver, blue or blue-green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

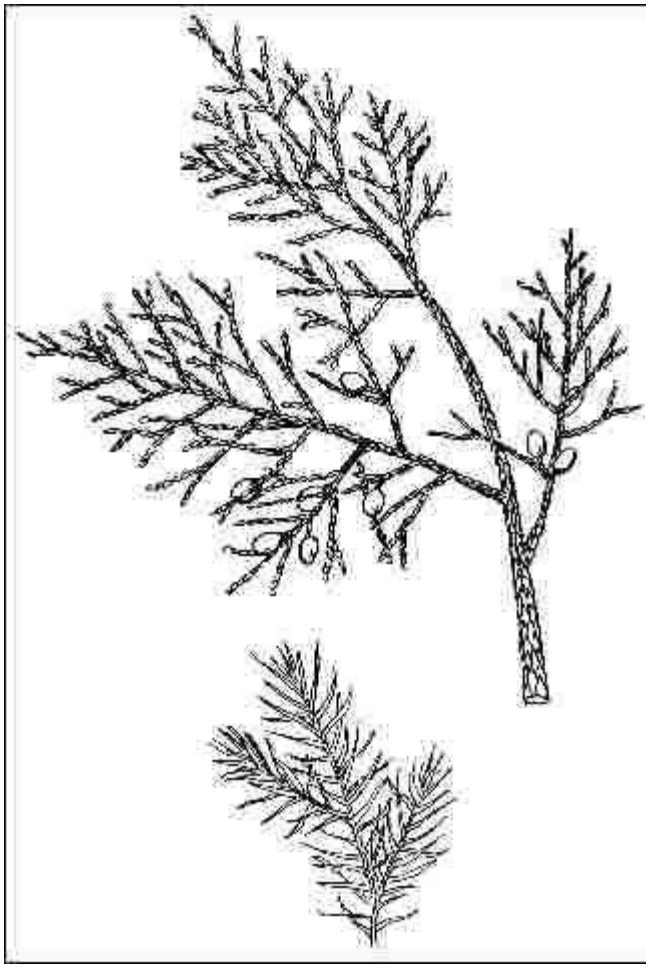

Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: yellow, green

Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: cone, round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: blue, purple

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

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; showy; typically one trunk; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: susceptible to breakage

Current year twig color: brown, green

Current year twig thickness: thin

Wood specific gravity: 0.47

Culture

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

Soil tolerances: sand; loam; clay; acidic; alkaline; 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 Eastern redcedar a favorite for windbreaks, screens, and wildlife-cover for large-scale landscapes. The narrow crown would call for close spacing for a screen planting. It can be used as a garden accent or specimen in a ground cover bed. Its high salt-tolerance makes it ideal for seaside locations. The fragrant wood is popular for repelling insects.

Planted in full sun or partial shade, Eastern redcedar will easily grow on a variety of soils, including clay, but will not do well on soils kept continually moist. Growth will 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.

Some nurseries carry a cultivar or two of redcedar.

Cultivars include: 'Burkii' - pyramidal, blue foliage, 15 to 25 feet tall; 'Canaertii' - compact, pyramidal, good fruit production, fairly common in Texas; 'Hillspire' - (cupressifolia) - good green color; 'Elegantissima' - Goldtip Redcedar - branchlets with yellow tips, less than 20 feet tall; 'Filifera' - pyramidal, branchlets divided, foliage gray green; 'Glauca' - Silver Redcedar - narrow, columnar, 15 to 20 feet tall, silvery blue foliage especially in spring; 'Ketlerii' is commonly available in the mid-west, is more open with spaces between branches at the top of the tree, pyramidal; 'Manhattan Blue' - compact, 20 feet tall, pyramidal, foliage bluish green; 'Pendula' - Weeping Redcedar - branchlets pendulous, to 40 feet tall; 'Pyramidalis Dundee' - pyramidal, purplish green in winter.

Pests

Usually none are serious.

Bagworm caterpillars occasionally 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 first two diseases form 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. There may be local restrictions on planting this tree near apple orchards because it is the alternate host for cedar-apple rust. A separation of a few hundred yards may help avoid the disease. Prune out the spore horns when seen in the spring. Do not plant near hawthorns, apples, or crabapples.

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

[1] This document is ENH-493, one of a series of the UF/IFAS Department of Environmental Horticulture Department. Original publication date November 1993. Revised December 2006. Reviewed March 2014. Visit the Ask IFAS website at https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu for the currently supported version of this publication. © UF/IFAS. This publication is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 *To learn more about creating and maintaining attractive landscapes that protect Florida's water and natural resources, visit ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/.*

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