

Eastern redcedar

Juniperus virginiana



Eastern redcedar, an evergreen cone-bearing tree found in old fields and open sites, is the most widely distributed conifer in the eastern United States. Because Eastern redcedar grows first on disturbed sites, it's known as a pioneer species. Many products are made from its aromatic, rot-resistant wood. More than 60 wildlife species eat redcedar berries. The redcedar's dense foliage provides an ideal cover and nesting sites for birds. Eastern redcedar trees on ideal sites may grow up to 120'.

Description

Height	40' - 50'
Spread	12' - 20'
Shape	Conical & Narrow
Growth rate	Moderate
Light requirement	Full Sun
Soil requirement	Dry soil, can grow in poor soil

Products

The striking, aromatic, pink-hued, rot-resistant wood is straight grained and easy to split. Fences, shingles, furniture, coffins, chests, animal bedding, pencils, and wood carvings are made from Eastern redcedar wood. The wood's scent acts as a natural insect repellent. Perfumes and soaps are scented with cedar oil, which is extracted from the wood. The fruit-like cones are used to flavor gin. Eastern redcedar is also cultivated as a Christmas tree.

Benefits

Foxes, mice, rabbits, raccoons, opossums, and many bird species eat Eastern redcedar berries. Mockingbirds, robin, song sparrows, and cardinals use the redcedar's dense foliage for winter roosting. White-tailed deer heavily browse the foliage in the winter up five feet from the ground, which gives the tree a vase-shape.



Cedar waxwing



Christmas Tree



Cedar soap



Cedar chest

Cedar or Juniper?

This tree is from the juniper family, although its common name implies otherwise. True cedars come from the old world genus *Cedrus* such as the Lebanon cedar *Cedrus libani* and Deodar cedar *Cedrus deodara*. Eastern redcedar or any other "cedar" native to North America is not from the true cedar family.

Fire

Wildfires ignite the highly flammable foliage of the Eastern redcedar, which kills the tree and spreads the fire. The Eastern redcedar's shape and shreddy bark allow the fire to easily climb from ground level to the canopy level, which intensifies the fire. Because of extreme fire danger, Eastern redcedars should be planted away from houses.

Disease

Cedars are often disfigured by the galls of a fungus disease, known as cedar-apple rust. During wet weather in the spring, the fungus appears as long, yellow, jelly-like growths that may spread to apple trees, damaging their leaves and spotting the fruit.

Native Americans & Cedar

Because Native Americans found so many medicinal uses for Eastern redcedar, they called it the "medicine tree" or "tree of life." They made a tea from the fruits and leaves to treat coughs and colds. The berries were used to treat canker sores and the leaf smoke or steam was inhaled to treat colds, bronchitis, and arthritis.



Native Americans also believed the Eastern redcedar tree to be sacred. They burned the strong-smelling wood in ceremonies to cast away evil spirits and never used it as fuel.

For more information on Eastern redcedar please contact your regional forester:

North (973) 786-5035
Central (609) 726-1621
South (609) 625-1124

Forest Resource Education Center
www.NJForestryCenter.org
forestrycenter@gmail.com (732) 928-2360



Cedar places in New Jersey

- Cedarville
- Cedar Brook
- Cedar Creek
- Cedar Grove
- Cedar Knolls
- Cedar Run
- Harvey Cedars



Did you know?

- Baton Rouge, the capital of Louisiana, means "red stick" for the Eastern redcedar
- Over 80 species of birds feed on the bluish berry-like cones
- Redcedar's wood contains aromatic oils that repel moths and termites

References

Martine, C. 2007. *Trees of New Jersey and the Mid-Atlantic States*. Jackson: New Jersey Forest Service.

Turner, M. 2009. *Remarkable Plants of Texas: Uncommon Accounts of Our Common Natives*. Austin: University of Texas Press.



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