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Suburban Gardener

Versatile Juniper: Tree, Shrub Or Bush

By BETTY FRANKEL
Special Writer

Junipers are easy-to-grow evergreens that are valuable plants for landscape use. Some have scale-like leaves and others have small needle-like leaves. They are members of the cypress family.

Junipers thrive in a sunny situation and prefer soil that is well-drained and a little on the alkaline side. Young plants are easy to transplant but should be moved with a ball of earth. It is more difficult to move older specimens.

There are numerous native species as well as many exotic ones imported from the orient. Some junipers are tall trees. Others are bushy shrubs, and still others grow flat along the ground.

One of the tallest is the Eastern red-cedar (Juniperus virginiana) which can grow 100 feet high. There are many horticultural varieties. Dundee is a kind with blue-green foliage, and the silver cedar has silvery needles. These all have an upright cone shape. The red cedar, or its varieties, can be planted and closely clipped to make a very handsome tall hedge.

THE CHINESE juniper (J. chinensis) is also a tall tree, up to 60 feet in height. Old specimens can be very picturesque. There are numerous horticultural varieties of this variety including the Ames which is a broad pyramidal shrub 10 feet or more in height, and some excellent columnar forms that are straight and narrow.

The best known of all junipers is the Pfitzer, which is a variety of Chinese juniper. This large shrub has beautiful gray-green plume-like branches that can spread six feet. It can reach 10 feet tall but has a broad flat-topped shape quite unlike most other junipers. It is widely used in landscape planting and will tolerate considerable shade.

Although Pfitzer will withstand severe pruning, so its size can be restricted, if a smaller plant is desired the dwarf Pfitzer (J. chinensis pfitzeriana compacta) should be used. It is a slow grower that seldom gets over 30 inches tall.

Armstrong is another compact form that has pleasant gray-green foliage. Hetz juniper (J. chinensis hetzii) is particularly graceful plant with arching branches that give it a fountain form. The color is a beautiful blue-green. This plant reaches about five feet in height with a spread of five feet.

ANOTHER native available in many choice forms is the common juniper (J. communis). Specimens are often seen springing up in abandoned pastures, but this plant is not adapted for landscape use because the needles often turn brown in winter. The horticultural varieties, though, do not have this problem.

The Irish and the Swedish juniper are narrow upright forms. The vase juniper (J. chinensis depressa) has an unusual vase shape with ascending branches and gray-green foliage. It is a semi-dwarf about four feet tall.

Savin juniper (J. sabina) is fan shaped, with dark green foliage. It can reach 10 feet, but is generally about five. Particularly attractive is the tamarax juniper (J. sabina tamariscifolia) which is a small compact spreading plant 18 inches high with blue-green needles.

Among the lowest of the junipers, suitable for a rock garden or to use as a ground cover are creeping varieties (J. horizontalis) these include the Japanese juniper and the Andorra. Also look for Bar Harbor and Blue Carpet, and Sargent's juniper which has steel-blue needles and can form a mat eight or 10 feet in diameter.

JUNIPERS have the sexes on separate plants. The females produce round blue berries the size of a pea. These are very decorative, but unfortunately there is no way of distinguishing sex except when a plant has the fruit on it.

Junipers are sometimes infected with a juniper rust, a fungus that forms fleshy orange growths on the branches. This fungus spends part of its life cycle on hawthorns and crabapples where it makes rusty spots on the leaves.

It can be controlled by spraying with Fomate in early May.

Child's Room

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