

Redcedar

Juniperus virginiana
L.



The eastern redcedar is an evergreen conifer, and is a common tree across the eastern half of North America. It's actually a juniper, not a cedar. In nature, it is a pioneer species in limestone areas and on glacial till plains. In nature, the berries are often a dark color, almost black, but most cultivated varieties have bluer berries, as is shown in the illustration. This tree has two types of needles. On younger growth, they are often open, and sharp, while on more mature growth, they are usually clasping the branch and fairly smooth, as shown. The wood is extensively harvested for its color and aromaticity, and is used for cedar closets and cedar chests, as well as for bedding for small pets such as hamsters. The berries have been used to flavor gin. Indians sometimes used the berries in pemmican. This tree can grow to 65 feet. When it is small, it usually has the oval shape shown, but older trees become rather picturesque. This is a good tree to use for a windbreak.

Cultivation

The redcedar is very easy to grow. It tolerates most conditions, although it may not do well in acid soils. It tolerates both heavy clay soils and nutrient-poor soils exceptionally well. It does not tolerate shade. Two or more trees must be planted for berries to develop. Hardy to USDA zone 3.

Photo credits: Foliage: Keith Kanoti, Maine Forest Service; Tree: Greg Hume



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