



# *Juniperus scopulorum* Rocky Mountain Juniper<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

*Juniperus scopulorum* is a native plant that can be found in the western United States (Fig. 1). In general, *Juniperus scopulorum* is a slow growing evergreen tree with a narrow, pyramidal habit that grows to a mature height of 30 to 40 feet. It is similar to other Junipers in that it requires a full sun exposure and will tolerate dry and droughty soils. *Juniperus scopulorum* is useful as a privacy screen or specimen. This Juniper is difficult to grow in the south due to disease problems. If you try it, provide excellent drainage and keep the foliage dry.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Juniperus scopulorum*

**Pronunciation:** joo-NIP-er-us skop-yoo-LOR-um

**Common name(s):** Rocky Mountain Juniper, Colorado Redcedar

**Family:** Cupressaceae

**USDA hardiness zones:** 4 through 9A (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** Bonsai; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; screen; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

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

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 30 to 40 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more

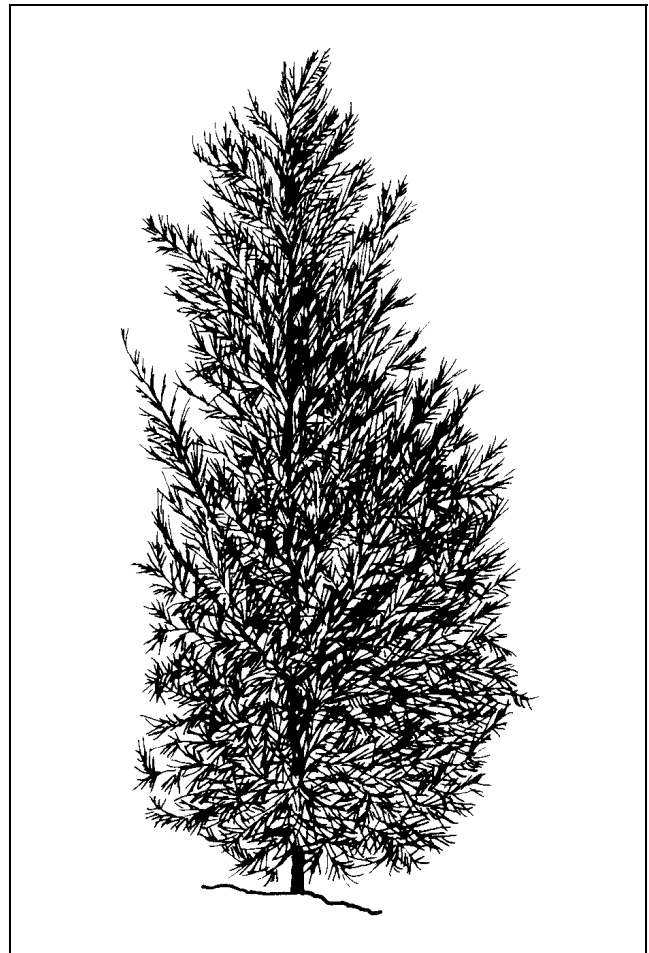


Figure 1. Young Rocky Mountain Juniper.

or less identical crown forms

**Crown shape:** columnar; pyramidal

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** slow

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Texture:** fine

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite; whorled

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire; terminal spine

**Leaf shape:** scale-like

**Leaf venation:** none, or difficult to see

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen; fragrant

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** blue or blue-green; green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** blue

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown; gray

**Current year twig thickness:** thin

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun

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

**Drought tolerance:** high

## Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** not known to be susceptible

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## USE AND MANAGEMENT

There are many cultivars of this plant available to consumers due to the efforts of nursery operators. Only a small sample of their variability will be presented here. 'Gray Gleam' - silvery gray foliage, pyramidal, slow growing to 15 feet in 30 years; 'Skyrocket' - very narrow columnar growth, bluish green foliage. After the plant reaches about 15 feet tall (after about 10 to 15 years) it is subject to bending of the lateral branches, some to the ground, ruining its form. 'Table Top' - semi-upright, flat-topped growth habit, silvery gray foliage, five feet high in 10 years; 'Wichita Blue' - bright blue cast to foliage, pyramidal form.

## Pests

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 blight causes death and browning of twig tips. The disease 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.

Three rust diseases seen most often are cedar-apple rust, hawthorn rust, and quince rust. Cedar-apple is the most common. 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.