Juniperus virginiana ‘Elegantissima’: ‘Elegantissima’
Eastern Redcedar

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

Introduction
This cultivar of redcedar is an evergreen growing 20 feet tall in an oval form and spreading 8 to 15 feet when given a sunny location. Foliage is tipped with yellow and 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): ‘Elegantissima’ 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; bonsai; screen; reclamation; highway median
Availability: not native to North America

Description
Height: 20 to 30 feet
Spread: 8 to 15 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical
Crown shape: oval, columnar, pyramidal
Crown density: moderate
Juniperus virginiana 'Elegantissima': 'Elegantissima' Eastern Redcedar

Growth rate: fast
Texture: fine

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

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: branches do not 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. Its high salt-tolerance makes it ideal for seaside locations. Redcedar can make a nice Christmas tree, and the fragrant wood is popular for repelling insects. Although not currently used as a street tree, its wood is strong, the foliage is clean, and the fruit is small, making it a suitable candidate. With proper pruning to remove lower branches, it should adapt well to street-scapes. Some southern cities have planted the species successfully as a street tree.

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

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: variegated
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

Figure 2. Range
Juniperus virginiana 'Elegantissima': 'Elegantissima' Eastern Redcedar

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.

Other cultivars include 'Burkii'—pyramidal, blue foliage, 15
to 25 feet tall; 'Canaertii'—compact, pyramidal, good fruit
production, fairly common in Texas; 'Hillspire' (cupress-
sisfolia)—good green color; 'Filifera'—pyramidal, branchlets
divided, foliage gray green; 'Glauc' - silver redcedar—nar-
row, columnar, 15 to 20 feet tall, silvery blue foliage
especially in spring; 'Ketlerii'—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;
'Skyrocket'—silver-blue foliage, narrow columnar form.

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. Remov-
ing the ice is impractical.