PLANT FACT SHEET

Juniperus communis L.

GENUS *Juniperus* **FAMILY** Cupressaceae

COMMON NAMES Common Juniper, Erect Juniper, Juniper berry

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Herb, Spice, Branch - tea

CAUTION: The berries are edible in small quantities but are harmful in large amounts.
They are used as a flavouring for example in gin. The berries and dried and the oil distilled off.
The berries are dried then cooked with food to add flavour. They are used to flavour meat.
They are also made into a conserves, jams and drinks.
Roasted berries are used as a coffee substitute.

DESCRIPTION

A small evergreen shrub to a large spreading tree. It grows 0.6-7.5 m high and reaches 0.9-6 m wide. It can be trunkless. It has many long branches near the ground. The leaves are glossy and needle-like. They have an aroma. They are 12-20 mm long. They are mid-green or yellow-green with a yellow underside. They are jointed at the base and with a sharp tip and arranged in rings of 3. The fruit are rounded and fleshy. They are green but ripen black or dark purple with a waxy bloom. There are small, yellow male cones and blue-black female cones. These are on separate plants.

HABITAT

A temperate plant. It is frost hardy. It grows on alpine slopes. It will grow on chalk soils and also on acid soils. It grows between 2,400-3,500 m altitude in the southern USA. It suits hardiness zones 2-8. Arboretum Tasmania.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. The cones need 18 months of cold weather before seed will grow.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees are very slow growing. The berries are harvested by hand and air dried.

NOTES

There are 50 to 60 Juniperus species.
They have health benefits.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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