



Red Cedar  
*Juniperus virginiana*



# TREE OF THE MONTH

Red Cedar • *Juniperus virginiana*

ALSO KNOWN AS: EASTERN RED CEDAR, PENCIL CEDAR

Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) is an early pioneer species, often one of the first trees to return to land that was previously used for agricultural purposes, usually pastures and fields that are returning to forest. The fragrant wood is prized for its antimicrobial and anti-pest qualities, and its rot-resistance.



OPPOSITE BRANCHING PATTERN



ALTERNATE BRANCHING PATTERN



WHORLED BRANCHING PATTERN

Eastern red cedar is known as an early pioneer species, often one of the trees first to return to land that previously was used for agricultural purposes – usually pastures and fields that is returning to forest. The fragrant wood is prized for its antimicrobial and anti-pest qualities, and its rot-resistance.

Red cedar's needles are actually modified leaves that grow in whorls (roughly concentric circles around the branch or twig). Needles turn yellowish on young trees and on new growth on older trees during winter months. In summer, needles are usually a rich blue-green that contrasts beautifully with the red heartwood.

Bark on mature trees is fibrous with long, narrow, peeling sections. Color can vary from grey to yellow-red on outer surfaces and is often deep red-brown on inner surfaces. The buds are tiny and often barely noticeable. Red cedar cones look like berries, having blueish flesh and usually have 1 – 2 seeds.

Lumber from red cedar has been widely used for hundreds of years. Chests made from red cedar wood are prized for their ability to keep moths and other pests away from fabric. Red cedar was once the wood of choice for pencils but has since been replaced by incense-cedar.

**Red cedar has an irregular branching pattern, often called 'whorled.' This means that the branches sprout from the trunk or branches irregularly around the circumference.**

Red cedars are found in eastern North America as far north as southern Quebec. In hurricane-prone states, red cedars are noted for their hurricane resistance. The volatile oils in the wood make it highly flammable.

Tree of the Month is a collaboration between BEAT, the City of Pittsfield, Pittsfield Tree Watch, and the MA Department of Conservation & Recreation's Greening the Gateway Cities Program. Find out more at [thebeatnews.org](http://thebeatnews.org).

