

Common Juniper (*Juniperus communis*)

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Want a native groundcover that is drought tolerant? Want it to be evergreen and minimum care? Would you also prefer one that has some cultivars for a broader selection?

The common juniper (*Juniperus communis*) is a plant to consider. The shown here is a prostrate form of common juniper growing in the wild, only one of many photographs available at the OSU Plant ID site <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ldplants/juco.htm>. Even the semi-upright and upright forms are still dwarfed and have a lot of gardening potential. Virtues you may be interested in include 1) the ability to grow in poor soil, 2) adaptable to a wide range of conditions, 3) hardy at cold temperatures (Zone 2), and 3) dozens of available cultivars. For example, you can choose from 'Alpine Carpet' a prostrate form with bluish scales, or 'Depressa aurea' with yellow foliage that grows to about 5 feet.

Although native to the Pacific Northwest, this species can also be found in northern climates throughout the globe, leading to the wide array of cultivars and conditions this species offers. Most of the Pacific Northwest forms are prostrate in habit. Our native form is *J. communis* var. *depressus*.

It does have other uses as well. According to a food information site at Oregon State University (<http://food.oregonstate.edu/glossary/j/jplant13.html>) berries are used to flavor gin, have been used as a pepper substitute, to brew a special French beer, and as flavoring in sauerkraut.

To find the native form, check with local or regional native plant nurseries. The cultivars can often be found at larger garden centers.

