

red cedar *Juniperus virginiana*

Kingdom: Plantae

Division/Phylum: Coniferophyta

Class: Pinopsida

Order: Pinales

Family: Cupressaceae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

Red cedar is also known as juniper or eastern red cedar. This evergreen tree may grow to 90 feet tall, although it is usually much smaller. Trunk diameter may be as much as three feet. The tree's bark is red-brown and splits into long shreds. Leaves are of two types: flat and triangular, up to one-sixteenth inch long; or short and needlelike, up to three-fourths inch long. Leaves may be blue-green, green or yellow-green. Male and female cones are produced on separate trees. Pollen is produced in small, yellow spikes. Female cones develop in small, purple clusters. The mature female cones are berrylike, spherical, up to one-fourth inch in diameter. These dark blue cones have a white coating and contain one or two seeds.

BEHAVIORS

Red cedar may be found throughout Illinois. It grows in fields, dry woods and on cliffs. Wind is the primary pollinating agent for this plant. Birds often aid the dispersal of red cedar by eating the mature cones and passing the undigested seeds out with their waste products. Leaves, stems and cones all provide food for wildlife. The wood is used in clothing chests, pencils and fence posts.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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