

Andrew Smith
Golden Arrow Bonsai
22473 Alpine Acres Dr
Deadwood, SD
57732
605-342-4467
goldenarrowbonsai@gmail.com
www.goldenarrowbonsai.com



Rocky Mt. Juniper
Juniperus scopularum

Utah Juniper
Juniperus osteosperma

General

Rocky Mt juniper, and Utah juniper, a similar species, grow in the mountainous west and west central United States. The tree typically prefers very harsh, rocky sites and frequently grows in locations where no other trees will grow, such as cliff faces and solid rock slopes. They are adapted to extremely dry, windy environments and tolerate wide extremes and sudden changes in temperature. They are found on both alkaline and acidic sites.

Rocky Mt. juniper are known for their fantastic driftwood and ancient character. Some wild specimens are believed to be over 2,000 years old.

Light

This tree requires full, bright sunlight through the majority of the day. Dappled sunlight is OK, but over long periods of time (several years) too much shade will lead to a slow decline in the vigor of the tree. Shade will also tend to make the foliage elongated and not as suitable for bonsai. However, after periods of stress (repotting, wiring, pruning, after shipping, etc), the tree will benefit from partial shade and misting for a week or two.

Water

Rocky Mt. juniper typically grow in a dry environment and the root system requires that oxygen be available. In a bonsai container they are usually grown in a coarse, free draining soil mixture with a minimum amount of organic material that will not become waterlogged for long periods. In hot weather the tree should be watered when the soil appears dry, but not if it still appears wet. In the heat of summer I usually give everything a brief spray in the morning, time permitting, and then do a real watering in the evening. They require less water than most other trees and missing a watering or two is not usually a cause for concern. A small pot will require more frequent watering

than a large one. A very large pot might only need to be watered twice a week. Too much water can result in elongated foliage.

Winter

Rocky Mt. juniper are very winter hardy and can easily tolerate temperatures well below zero when precautions are taken. They can be wintered outside on the ground in a shaded area out of the wind with the pot covered in mulch to the rim. They can be kept in an unheated garage or greenhouse. They should probably freeze at least once or twice per winter to ensure dormancy and can stay frozen for the whole winter without harm. In their native environment they may have occasional nighttime freezes during almost any month of the year. The root system can be damaged by periods of warmer winter weather followed by sudden, intense cold snaps however, so it is best if they are kept in a spot where temperatures will remain relatively cool and stable.

Fertilizer

A mild fertilizer of almost any kind will work well. A slow-release fertilizer like Osmocote, or Bio-gold works well.

Training

Rocky Mt. junipers typically have dramatic trunks with exceptional driftwood that lends itself to making spectacular jin and shari. Smaller branches are easily shaped with wire and larger branches are surprisingly flexible once they are supported with wire. Old branches with stiff deadwood in them are common and can be bent as well using more specialized techniques.

Juniper foliage should not be randomly pinched. Instead, thin out crowded shoots and suckers that sprout from branch crotches and bases. Use scissors or fingers to nip the center, elongated shoot from each palm of foliage. Do not pinch the tips of all the foliage though, as this will tend to weaken the tree and stimulate more juvenile foliage.

Over watering and too much fertilization may result in foliage that is too leggy and a bit too bluish in color. Give the tree more sun and a bit less water to correct this. Also, a bit of agricultural lime may be applied. As the tree becomes pot acclimated and root growth slows a bit, the foliage will become mature.

Repotting

Generally a newly collected tree takes about three years to re-establish its root system in its new container. At this time there is usually a noticeable increase in vigor and this is a good sign that the tree is ready for repotting. The best time for this is in the spring, after all danger of freezing is past. At this time dead roots can be removed, excessively long roots can be trimmed and

more of the remaining original soil can be washed off. The planting angle can be adjusted to fit the new container.

There may be good reasons to repot before three years; a tree may already be strong and vigorous, a pot may have cracked or other reasons. In this case it is usually better to just move the tree into its new pot while trying to disturb the root system as little as possible. A newly repotted tree should always be protected from freezing.