

GREEN AND LEAN, UPRIGHT EVERGREENS

By Ralph E. Mitchell, Director/Horticulture Agent - UF/IFAS Extension Service, Charlotte County

Many of our yards feature taller, upright plants that add some dimension and interest to the landscape. Three trees that I have seen in many Charlotte County yards that provide this feature are the 'Torulosa' Juniper, the Italian Cypress, and another type of Juniper - the Red Cedar. All of these plants provide upright growth ideal for an accent in formal landscapes. These needed evergreens also have differences that add something to the landscape like no other plants.

The Torulosa juniper is a beautiful evergreen. We have a specimen at our office and I have seen it grow over the years into a graceful, but slightly twisted plant that reminds me of a flickering green flame. Starting out in a more or less cone-shape, the Torulosa grows at a moderate rate to about 15 feet tall with bright green color and soft texture for a juniper. It is highly



drought-tolerant and has good salt tolerance. Best for a full sun to part shade site, this juniper adapts to a wide soil pH range including alkaline soil as long as it is well-drained. Consider that it will grow more compact in full sun while it develops a more open growth pattern in partial shade. The Torulosa really does not require any pruning and will develop into a showcase specimen over time. A thick screen can be developed by planting individual specimens on four to six-foot centers along a driveway or used as a privacy buffer elsewhere.

The Italian Cypress really stands out with its narrow, columnar growth habit. Growing over 25 feet tall, this fairly tall evergreen grows only three to six feet wide. While it can be grown as a screen, it also looks nice for framing large buildings. Its needled blue-green foliage is fine textured and should not be pruned. The Italian Cypress has a few challenges and issues to keep in mind. A nice sized specimen can outgrow its site and become too tall for some residential landscapes. While

an interesting specimen, some have compared these thin evergreens to "green telephone poles"! Also, be on the lookout for spider mites as Italian Cypress are rather susceptible to this pest. Just like the Torulosa Juniper, it is essential that you situate the Italian Cypress in a well-drained soil as root rot can develop. There are a couple of cultivars to look for including 'Stricta' and 'Horizontalis' which has horizontal growing branches.

One final useful upright evergreen is the Red Cedar. Growing up to 40 feet tall with a 25 foot spread, this evergreen grows fairly quickly into a dense pyramidal to oval form. Individual Red Cedars may have some diversity in their ultimate shape including a more columnar appearance. The dense growth

makes the Red Cedar a good candidate for use as an informal screen or windbreak. It is also very drought-tolerant once established and also grows well within seaside conditions. Although it is somewhat difficult to transplant larger specimens, smaller containerized plants will do well and grow fast. Plant Red Cedars in full sun locations in well-drained sites that are not watered too much. Our alkaline soils are not an issue as these junipers adapt well to poor soils.

All of these tall, upright evergreens are pleasing to the eye and properly situated in consideration of ultimate height and well-drained locations, can provide the finishing touches on your yard.

Resource:

Gilman, E.F. & Watson, D.G. (1993) Juniperus chinensis 'Torulosa', 'Torulosa ' Juniper. UF/IFAS Extension Service.

Gilman, E.F. & Watson, D.G. (1993) Cupressus sempervirens 'Glauca', 'Glauca ' Italian Cypress. UF/IFAS Extension Service.

Gilman, E.F. & Watson, D.G. (2006) Juniperus virginiana: Eastern Red cedar. UF/IFAS Extension Service.

For information on all types of trees, please contact our Master Gardeners on the Plant Lifeline at 941.764.4340 from 1:00pm-4:00pm Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Our office is located at 25550 Harbor View Road, Suite 3, in Port Charlotte. Our Plant Clinics are available across the county:

- **Demonstration Garden** (6900 Florida Street, PG) Thursdays 9:00am-11:00am.
- **Englewood/Charlotte Public Library** Thursdays 10:00am-1:00pm.
- **Mid-County Regional Library** 1st and 3rd Thursday of month 1:00pm-3:00pm.
- **Edison College Learning Resources Library** 3rd Tuesday of month 1:00pm-4:00pm.

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For more information about our Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, please contact our FYN Horticulture Program Assistant, Allison Steele, at 941.764.4351. Allison can help educate you about the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Program so that you can create a beautiful, Florida-Friendly landscape that saves you time and money while conserving precious water resources and reducing pollution.