

TREE NEWS

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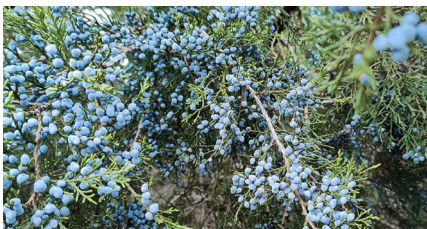
BUCKING TREE SELECTION TRENDS

During this time of year, it's natural to get tricked by yet another false spring and start planning what to buy from the nursery. I've found myself on many an afternoon walking the rows of balled and burlap trees that were definitely not going to fit in my car. Invariably by the end of the rows, I'd be struck by the thought of, "Is this all?" Don't get me wrong, I do enjoy a nice Japanese maple or stately Nuttall oak, but I also walk around with 200-some-odd botanical names rattling around in my head. So since that intrusive thought wasn't going to go away, I decided to spotlight two trees you may not have thought about or even heard of; one native evergreen and one exotic deciduous.



Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)

Good trees make good neighbors, so the endless rows of cedars lining the driveways of farm houses should put this tree pretty high on the list of good trees. Its ubiquity in the rural landscape might be the reason it isn't seen often in the urban landscape or formal gardens. This sturdy tree has a slow steady growth rate and ability to withstand extreme drought, high alkaline soils, and reflected heat. On its own as a specimen, a large eastern red cedar seems to have its whole life's story laid to bare with its gnarled twisting dead branches refusing to rot away. If you're lucky enough to have a female tree, you'll be treated to an explosion of blue-colored, small, berry-like cones throughout the winter.



Japanese Katsura (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*)

The Katsura seems both alien and familiar. The heart-shaped leaves of this medium tree resemble a redbud leaf (*Cercis*) even though they aren't actually related. With only two species in this family, the Katsura has few pests or diseases. It adapts well to very wet soils without the susceptibility to leaf diseases like powdery mildew. While it doesn't have showy flowers in the spring, the leaves of cultivar 'red fox' start out as a burgundy red before transitioning to an emerald green color throughout the summer. And in the fall, the leaves change to mostly golds and orange, but with some red before dropping to the ground and giving off a bizarrely enjoyable cotton candy smell.



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