

The Troodos mountain **Stinking juniper** (*Juniperus foetidissima*) belongs to the *Cupressaceae* family. The genus includes about 60 species, widely distributed throughout the northern hemisphere, mainly in mild climates.

Many Juniper species are used in landscaping as well as for timber, resin and essential oils production and **used to flavor** a wide variety of foods and **drinks**.

Apart from the *Juniperus foetidissima*, three more Juniper species are also found in Cyprus: *Juniperus oxycedrus*, *Juniperus phoenicea* (juniper of Akamas), and *Juniperus excelsa* (juniper of Madari).

Description

It is a medium-sized, long-lived evergreen tree, usually 3-5 m high and occasionally up to 20 m, with a lifespan up to 1500 years.

Its crown is broadly conical, becoming rounded or irregular with time.

The bark on young trees or branches is smooth, and on old trees fibrous, grey, peeling off longitudinally in strips. Its timber is hard, fragrant and durable against fungus and insects.

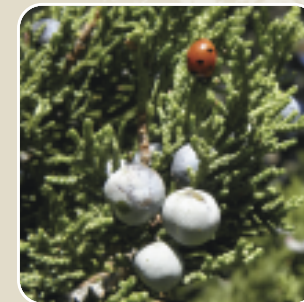
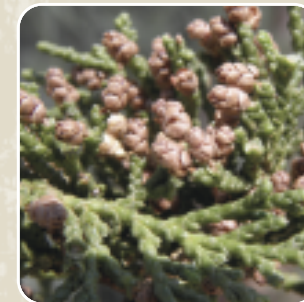
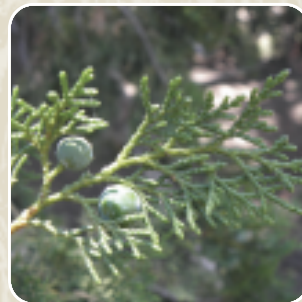
Flowers are unisexual. Male cones are small, terminal, yellowish – brown, while females are axillary, dark violet-purple or blackish. The flowering period is from December to June.

It is mainly dioecious with separate male and female plants, but some individual plants are monoecious, producing both male and female flowers.

The fruit is berry-like with united carpels, globose, about 1cm in diameter, dark violet-purple, nearly black, with 1-3 seeds. The seed maturation period is from November to February of the second year after pollination. The fruit is an excellent food to a large number of wild birds.

The leaves are opposite, scale-like, decussate, very small, 1.5 mm long, dark green, awl-shaped in young growths very similar to foliage of cypresses.

The name foetidissima was given to the plant because of the characteristic intense odor of the young twigs, when they are crushed. In reality the odor is anything else rather than foetid.



Distribution - Habitat

It is a widely distributed species growing on mountainous areas of the Balkans, Southeastern Europe and Southwestern Asia. Juniper is a native species of Albania, Greece, Turkey, and Syria and indigenous to Cyprus, where it is restricted to the Troodos area – Prodromos, Kryos Potamos, Chionistra, Almyrolivado, Kannoures, and elsewhere on altitudes of 1000 - 1950 m.

As a tree, which is the basic form of the species, juniper is the basic constituent of the priority habitat type 9563* (Forest clumps with *Juniperus foetidissima*) of Annex I, of the *European Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)* which is protected at European level.

Rarely, as a result of felling and other human activities, juniper grows in a bushy form forming the habitat type 5213 of the above Habitat Directive.

Historical Elements

Gennadios and Kavvadas believed that the plant is probably the “brathy (juniper) with intense odor”, as mentioned by Dioscurides.

The timber of the juniper, because of its hardness, fragrance and durability, was extensively used until the mid-20th century for domestic and for agriculture purposes such as house roofing, manufacturing of tools and furniture, as well as in smoked sausage making in the Marathasa region.

Human activities and in particular the overexploitation of forests, as well as forest fires seem to be the main reasons for the present limited number of the species, compared to the past.

Uses

Juniper tree can be used as an ornamental tree, as well as in landscaping with impressive results due to its strong sprouting, shape, dark green foliage and drought resistance.

It can be used in parks, gardens and elsewhere either in groups or individually. It is suitable for planting at an altitude of 1000 - 1950 m.

It is propagated by seeds and requires two to three years to reach the proper transplanting height. It is propagated and sold by the governmental nursery of the Department of Forests, at Platania Forest Station.

The timber of the juniper, because of its hardness, fragrance and durability, can be used in traditional housing, furniture making and especially in carving because of its attractive intense red color. It can also be used as a house insect repellent and as fuel wood.

Protection and Management

Juniper is a relatively common plant at the higher picks of Troodos Forest and is under the protection and management of the Department of Forests.

As mentioned earlier, it is the basic constituent of the habitat type 9563* and 5213 of Annex I, of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

Forest clumps with *Juniperus foetidissima* in Cyprus are mainly located on rocky and steep slopes of the Troodos National Forest Park. It can also be part of the understory of Black pine (*Pinus nigra*) forest as an individual.

Almost its entire habitat area has been included in the Natura 2000 network, while Cyprus is obliged to take all necessary measures to maintain this habitat type at a favorable conservation status.

A running project funded by the European Commission within the framework of the LIFE+ Programme, named JUNIPERCY, aims at the protection and the promotion of the long-term conservation of endemic forests with *Juniperus* spp. in Cyprus, with special emphasis on *Juniperus foetidissima*.

In Cyprus there are some century-old Juniper trees, such as the largest one on the island, growing at Loumata ton Aeton, with a diameter of 4.45 m and which is more than 500 years old. Some century-old Juniper trees can be also found at the higher picks of Troodos National Forest Park. All of them are managed and protected by the Department of Forests which is the competent Authority responsible for their conservation, or which is the competent Authority for their protection and conservation.

* priority habitat type



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TREE OF THE YEAR 2013

Stinking Juniper of the Troodos Mountain (*Juniperus foetidissima* Wild)



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