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Juniperus deppeana

[Synonyms : *Juniperus deppeana* var. *pachyphlaea*, *Juniperus deppeana* var. *sperryi*, *Juniperus gigantea*, *Juniperus mexicana*, *Juniperus pachyderma*, *Juniperus pachyphlaea*, *Juniperus pachyphloe*, *Juniperus patoniana*, *Sabina gigantea*]

ALLIGATOR JUNIPER is an evergreen tree. Native to south-western North America and to Mexico, it has small berry-like bloomed, bluish or reddish-brown cones.

It is also known as Alligator-bark juniper, Checker-barked cedar, Checker bark juniper, Mexican juniper, Mountain cedar, Oak-barked cedar, Sweet-fruited juniper, Texas mountain cedar, and Thick-bark cedar.

The thick bark is one of the factors that helps this tree to maintain a high resistance to drought. *Deppeana* commemorates a Prussian naturalist and artist, Ferdinand Deppe (1794-1861). In the 1820s he travelled in Central America, particularly Mexico and, with other explorers, collected natural history specimens (including plants) and made sketches as a hobby. At the end of the decade he returned to Europe, via California and Hawaii, where he is said to have owned a plant nursery. His picture of southern California dated about 1832 and entitled *San Gabriel Mission* is believed to be the first oil painting of that region. Some authorities suggest that while in Mexico he was trading in hides while others focus on the probability that his natural history specimens were primarily destined for a museum in Berlin then the capital of Prussia.

North American Yavapai Indians collected the dead wood for firewood.

The Zuni tribe made torches from shredding bark.

For the Yavapai Indians the berry-like cones were a staple food. They made a beverage from them, and they also pulped or ground the berries. They sucked out the berry juice and the ground berries (which they often stored for later food) were mixed with a very little water and formed into cakes. The Apache, some of the Navajo, some of the Keresan and the Isleta Indians all ate the berries raw or boiled – and the Navajo stored them for Winter food too. For the Zuni tribe the berries offered a food flavouring.

The brittle and fragrant wood was once used for making charcoal. In more recent times it has provided material primarily for fence posts and fuel, as well as furniture.

Some regions of North American view alligator juniper as an invasive plant.

Compared with a large number of wild birds and animals, livestock generally find alligator juniper unpalatable.