

*Juniperus monosperma*

[Synonyms : *Datura wrightii*, *Juniperus gymnocarpa*, *Juniperus mexicana* var. *monosperma*, *Juniperus occidentalis* var. *gymnocarpa*, *Juniperus occidentalis* var. *monosperma*, *Sabina monosperma*]

**ONESEED JUNIPER** is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native to south-western North America it has many limbs rising from the trunk at ground level, and small berry-like bloomed, dark blue cones.

It is also known as Cherrystone juniper, *Kalifornischer Stechapfel* (German), New Mexico cedar, Oneseeded juniper, Redberry juniper, Red cedar, Sabina, Sacred thornapple, Shagbark juniper, Western Texas juniper, and West Texas juniper.

Flowers are pollinated by the wind.

*Monosperma* is derived from Greek *mono-* (one) and *-sperma* (seed, seeded) components.

Quite a few North American Indian tribes picked the cones for food. While they were eaten cooked by the Indians of San Ildefonso and some of the Apache and Navajo tribes, the Tewa and some of the Keresan ate them raw as well. Authorities have noted that the Apache tribe made the berry-like cones into sauces, the Hopi and Keresan Indians used them for flavouring savoury dishes – and the latter also viewed them as an emergency food. For the Tewa Indians the plant's gum was a delicacy.

When the snow was deep on the ground Navajo Indians gathered the branches as sheep fodder. Oneseed juniper played various roles in tribal ritual. Keresan Indian mourners took an infusion of various parts of the plant, while some of the Navajo used it in funeral purification rituals. It was an ingredient in the body paint used by both the Tewa and Hopi tribes – and the branches featured in certain dances they and the Keresan performed. The wood was burnt during Zuni ceremonies at which its bark also served as firebrands. The Navajo tribe made the wood into prayer sticks and some parts of their tribe used the bark for torches in their Fire Dance.

Records indicate that a few Indian tribes attributed various supernatural powers to the plant. Both the Tewa and Hopi Indians used it to banish any evil spirits lurking after a death, while the Navajo tribe believed that if the leaves were chewed and spat out this would ensure good fortune.

The plant had many practical uses. It provided building material for the Keresan, Navajo, Hopi and Tewa Indians. The Hopi and Navajo Indians made fence posts out of the wood, and some of the Navajo used the wood for babies' cradles. Charcoal from this wood generated sufficient heat for the Navajo to smelt silver. The wood was also chosen by the Kiowa, Comanche, Cheyenne, Apache, Navajo and Keresan Indians for making their bows. (These were used for war in the case of the Navajo, and for hunting for the Keresan – and the earlier mentioned tribes made their arrows out of the wood too.). It was popular as fuel among the Keresan, Zuni, Isleta, Tewa and Navajo tribes – and the Tewa also used bark torches for lighting.

Great Basin Indians obtained a yellow dye from the plant. Bark and cones yielded a green wool dye for the Navajo and the green on the Keresan's moccasins was achieved by rubbing twigs on the material.

Finely rubbed bark was made into baby clothing by the Keresan (who also used oneseed juniper for basketry) and the Navajo lined their moccasins with it in Winter. Both the Hopi and Tewa Indians pierced dried seeds and strung these together for jewellery, and these tribes are also noted as having put the berries into toy rattles. For some of the Navajo tribe the plant provided medicine for treating bloated sheep. Authorities record that quite a few North American Indian tribes turned to the plant for human medicine. Among the Keresan it offered a treatment for diarrhoea, ear problems and insect bites. They also took it as a laxative and (like some of the Navajo) used it to treat various stomach ailments. Both the Keresan and some of the Navajo Indians employed it to cause sweating – and they and the Isleta prescribed it when vomiting was necessary. For some of the Apache Indians it could ease convulsions. The Isleta and some of the Navajo and Apache tribes all used oneseed juniper during childbirth – and the latter two prescribed it for easing coughs. It was used for colds by the Shoshoni, some of the Apache and the Paiute tribe. Some of the Navajo prescribed it for period disorders, and the Zuni, Hopi and Tewa Indians all used it as a remedy for other female problems. The plant was not only considered suitable by parts of the Navajo tribe for treating eye burns but they also believed it could ease fever and act as a stimulant. Hopi and Tewa tribes took it for indigestion and as a laxative – and they also applied it to bruises. The Tewa Indians not only prescribed it for fluid retention but they found the gum suitable for filling rotting teeth. Not least Zuni Indians recognized contraceptive properties in the plant.

Oneseed juniper was cultivated first in 1900. In 1990 it was noted that the tree covered a quarter of the State of New Mexico (the common name ‘New Mexico cedar’ is thus hardly surprising). Rarely used now commercially, the wood was once made into pit props, railway sleepers, fence posts and poles.