



Coastal red cedar (left) never attains the height of the eastern red cedar (right). PHOTOS BY KEN MOORE

FLORA
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on elongated egg-shaped bodies, punctuating rural landscapes like giant evergreen exclamation marks. You may have observed unusual pencil-thin specimens along roadways between High Point and Lexington, looking like cedars on a diet. And scattered about there are giant

old specimens with tops flattened out with age.

In contrast is the coastal or southern red cedar, *Juniperus silicicola*, (considered only a variety by current taxonomists), which grows on the outer coastal plain south to Florida. It is really out there, found on the exposed sand dunes, sculpted by winds and salt spray into twisted, horizontal, bonsai-

like configurations. Even in sheltered sites, this coastal variety displays a habit that is broader than tall, unlike its inland cousin.

I would like to grow one of these picturesque coastal cedars in my landscape; but though there are numerous cultivars of the eastern red cedar available in nurseries, I've never found cultivars of the coastal

variety. I've always wondered if the coastal cedar would grow straight and tall away from that challenging ocean-side environment.

Native Americans considered cedars sacred above all trees. The evergreenness; the pink-colored, aromatic, rot-resistant wood; and the medicinal qualities of the berries and leaves are just

a few of the merits that native people revered. Smoke from burning green and dried leaves and twigs was important in ceremonies, inhaled to relieve numerous internal ailments, and even believed effective in driving away malevolent spirits that could not endure the smell. The wood itself was too sacred to be used as fuel.

You are fortunate if you have a cedar or two already in your landscape. The bluish berries on the female trees are a favorite food of cedar waxwings and other birds and the dense foliage provides important nesting and roosting cover during all seasons. Simply seeing green accents of red cedars in the winter landscapes makes for a warm feeling.

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