



Cedars *Cedrus* spp.

Alex X. Niemiera, Professor, School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, Virginia Tech

True cedars, the genus *Cedrus*, are large exceptionally beautiful conifers. In youth they are conical trees but mature into grand picturesque specimens. There are three cedar (*Cedrus*) species in the landscape trade. Some taxonomists have revised the species designations which has resulted in three species converted to two species and a subspecies. However, most texts still list the three forms as individual species, as does this article. Since the size, form, and culture is similar for the three species (with a few exceptions), the Summary, Plant Needs, Functions, and Care sections will cover all three species; species differences will be noted for particular aspects. Cultivars for the three species will be covered in the Additional Information section.

Summary:

Foliage: Needle-like foliage at end of branches borne individually; needle-like foliage on inner portions of branches borne in clusters about 15 to 30 per cluster (spur); evergreen; *Cedrus atlantica* and *C. deodara* can have bluish (glaucous) foliage.

Height: About 60 feet

Spread: About 40 feet

Shape: Conical in youth; with age flat-topped and irregular

Main features: Cedars have a handsome, somewhat formal conical form in youth but they mature into grand picturesque flat-topped irregular forms with age. They are exceedingly beautiful plants that can serve as a specimen plant if one has the space to accommodate these large trees. Atlas cedar, *Cedrus atlantica*, and Lebanon cedar, *C. libani*, are similar with the former being adapted to zones 6 to 9, and the latter adapted to zones 5 to 7. Deodar cedar, *Cedrus deodara*, is adapted to zones 7 to 8, and tends to be more graceful due to its nodding branch tips and usually glaucous foliage. Thus, deodara cedar is the least hardy, Lebanon cedar is the hardiest, and Atlas cedar is the most heat tolerant. There are some cultivars of deodar cedar that have been selected for enhanced cold hardiness compared to the straight species (see Additional Information section). There are several notable cultivars for these species (see Additional Information section).

Plant Needs:

Zone: Atlas cedar 6 to 9; deodar cedar 7 to 8; Lebanon cedar 5 to 7

Light: Full sun

Moisture: Average to dry

Soil type: Most types but needs to be well-drained

pH range: Acid; Atlas cedar tolerates alkaline soil

Function:

Cedars are exceedingly beautiful plants that can serve as a specimen plant if one has the space to accommodate these large trees.

Care:

No special care is needed. Atlas and Lebanon cedars have a reputation for being difficult to transplant.

Additional Information:

Atlas Cedar

Cedrus atlantica

'Glauca' or var. *glauca* the taxonomic classification of variety (abbreviated var.) implies that many of the blue foliage forms of this species may originate from seedling populations of blue- foliated parents; blue foliated-forms are also vegetatively propagated.

'Glauca Pendula' a very wide spreading (about 50 feet in many years) but short (10 feet) pendulous cultivar; this form has very powdery blue foliage. Plant height and width will depend on how the plant is staked and trained in its youth; staking is necessary to keep the plant from being prostrate (creeping along the ground). One must visit the awesome specimen at the Gotelli Dwarf and Slow-growing Conifer Collection at the National Arboretum (Washington DC); the plant is truly an amazing site to behold.

Deodar Cedar

Cedrus deodara

'Aurea' yellow foliage color is most apparent in spring

'Feelin Blue' dwarf wide form with gray-blue foliage

'Karl Fuchs' one of the most cold hardy selections with very blue foliage

'Silver Mist' white tipped foliage; a mound form when young and broad conical (dwarf) with age

Lebanon Cedar

Cedrus libani

'Brevifolia' has short needles; not as large as species 'Green Prince' dwarf, very slow-growing cultivar

var. *stencoma* hardier than the species

