

Unknowingly, I developed an affinity for the 'Taylor' juniper well before it ever existed. It all goes back to a couple passions I possessed long ago as a kid. It must have started around 1953. It was then I became fascinated with sports cars, particularly the Corvette. I also had a passion for trees. My association of the two together stems to when I viewed colored advertisements of stunning sports cars in car magazines photographed against a beautiful landscape with tall, stately, columnar trees in the background. They often featured a beautiful woman standing next to the car; I'm guessing she was in the photo to add more interest and mystic — but I digress. Today my article is about trees, and particularly the 'Taylor' juniper.



Interestingly, the stately, columnar trees I mentioned in the paragraph above were often photos of the Italian cypress, a tree not indigenous to Zone 5. Italian cypress are hardy in Zones 8 -10. Back then, I quickly realized those trees and the beautiful sports cars were out of my reach. Even so, my passion for both never faded. Then it happened.

Sometimes, Mother Nature allows plants to change naturally. Science calls it evolution. When it happens, a new variation occurs, and so it happened around 1978. Near the town of Taylor, Nebraska, a genetic

mutation of Eastern red cedar, called *Juniperus virginiana*, was discovered. The naturally occurring oddity was unlike any of its siblings. This particular tree was unique. It was extremely slender, having an upright, columnar shape with silvery blue-green foliage. To this day, I think 'Taylor' juniper closely resembles Italian cypress but in appearance only. Genetically, it greatly differs. Like the Italian cypress, 'Taylor' juniper is stately looking with its formal, columnar shape. However, most excitingly, 'Taylor' juniper is capable of thriving in Zone 5. It also tolerates a wide variety of soil and environmental conditions found throughout Nebraska. Unfortunately, like other junipers, 'Taylor' juniper can be a secondary host to a disease called cedar/apple rust. The good news is that through careful management practices, this disease can be avoided or at least minimized.



Having realized the potential, ornamental-value of this tree, it was propagated, and in 1992, the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum introduced to the plant industry the 'Taylor' juniper. Today, this variety of juniper is available in most nurseries across the nation.

Attributes and uses of this tree are many. At maturity, 'Taylor' juniper is capable of reaching heights of twenty to thirty feet while only growing three feet in width. It definitely adds a vertical element to the landscape. I've seen it growing near a doorway creating a perpendicular presence to the horizontal lines of the building. This juniper is comfortable in tough urban sites such as narrow planting beds next to brick and concrete walls. Another great quality of this plant is that it never needs shearing. One doesn't have to worry about getting out the ladder to maintain its slender shape.

'Taylor' juniper creates an effective and orderly screen or border. Last week I wrote about planting thirty of these trees for Arbor Day on the east side of Minden's cemetery. We selected



'Taylor' juniper for this planting sight primarily to serve as a fast growing screen and to create a regal look. Incidentally, we purchased our trees from the NSA (Nebraska Statewide Arboretum). If properly cared for, our newly planted, eighteen-inch-tall 'Taylor' junipers, should reach nearly ten feet in height in five years.

To this very day, I still have my passion for Corvettes and now the 'Taylor' juniper. As you can see from my photo, I recently parked my Corvette in front of a row of older, yet beautiful, 'Taylor' junipers. The only thing missing is the beautiful woman. By the way, I did ask Rita if she'd pose with the car— but again, I digress.

