



This page: 'Mother Lode' creeping juniper (*Juniperus horizontalis* 'Mother Lode') was discovered in 1982 as a sport of the blue rug juniper (*Juniperus horizontalis* 'Wiltonii'). It is well known for its dramatic seasonal color changes. Opposite page: As the name implies, Calgary Carpet® holds up well in the toughest winters.

### By Elizabeth Petersen

Junipers are horticultural work-horses. Tough, tolerant plants, they take hot sun and bitter cold in stride and ask little in the way of attention. They line our commercial and public areas, where they endure the effects of weather, emissions and people.

These product qualities recommend junipers as hard workers, but hardly as beauties. Junipers are sometimes misunderstood, shuffled to the utility corner, given little respect.

But junipers deserve a second look.

Distinctive cultivars, introduced and grown by Oregon nurseries, offer great design options and year-round interest for discerning gardeners and artistic designers.

Brilliant colors and better habits





# Tough, but beautiful

**These junipers will withstand harsh conditions, while offering delightful and distinctive shapes and colors**

combined with tolerance for tough conditions should get these choice junipers starring roles in the landscape.

Monrovia Nursery grows regionally suited junipers at its four operations across the country in California, Oregon, North Carolina and Georgia. The nursery has introduced a significant slate of junipers to the trade and produces containerized plants for independent garden centers, re-wholesalers and the design community.

“Junipers play key roles in the landscape,” said Nicholas Staddon, director of new plants for Monrovia. “They supply all-season beauty as foundation and filler plants.”

In recent years, as gardens have gotten smaller, both spreading and upright junipers have found new uses as container plants too.

Junipers are nearly bullet-proof, notable for drought tolerance, ease of care and adaptability to most climates. The Monrovia website lists some 57 junipers, both familiar and unique, some sculpted into ornamental shapes.

“These junipers are beautiful, useful plants that flourish all over the country,” Staddon said.

Iseli Nursery, in Boring, Ore., grows distinctive juniper cultivars for the trade, too.

“Junipers are among the most useful of conifers,” said sales manager Jock Demme. “They are universal plants; they are so versatile that there are selections for everywhere, from San Diego to Syracuse, and Texas to Nebraska. There are lots of good junipers.”

According to Demme, junipers look best with as much sun as possible and planted in a raised situation atop a berm or rock wall so drainage is optimal. Iseli Nursery, which selects junipers with great colors and good habits, is responsible for introducing two to the trade, including ‘Mother Lode’ (*Juniperus horizontalis* ‘Mother Lode’) the highly regarded, prostrate, golden-yellow juniper.

About today’s market for junipers, Staddon said, “There are plenty of plants available, but they are slow and late to move in the garden centers. Customers are buying smaller plants, but there is a downtrend in the purchasing of large plants and topiary selections because of the time and expense it takes to train them.”

Staddon predicted their popularity will return, however.

Gold Hill Nursery, in Hillsboro, Ore. markets topiary junipers that are popular in the Rocky Mountain, mid-Atlantic and Southeast states as well as British Columbia and Ontario. Customers include other growers, re-wholesalers and independent garden centers.

“The most popular shapes by far are the poodle and spiral,” sales manager Matt Gold said. But Gold Hill has introduced a Masters Series of topiary designs based on shapes the owners observed in Italy. With names that reference their connection to Italy, including Raphael, DaVinci, Rembrandt and Michelangelo, they produce a very formal look.

“People who like the shapes often find pruning them to be a creative outlet that is both relaxing and distracting,” Gold said.

His advice for owners of sculpted plants is to prune back to the last prune marks, those left by the experts who trained them in the first place. Gold Hill’s new tags explain how to care for



# Picks from the PROS

**It isn't hard to get growers to talk about plants. The tough part is getting them to narrow down their list of favorites to just a handful. Here are some of the varieties our sources recommended:**

**Nicholas Staddon**  
Monrovia Growers Inc.  
Dayton, Ore.



**Bountiful Blue® blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum* 'FLX-2' PPAF)** — Bountiful Blue has a prolific fruit set of large, super sweet berries and the bluest foliage on any Blueberry

we have ever seen, making it a standout in the landscape or in a container. Will set fruit alone, but the berries will be more numerous if it's planted near another blueberry; we recommend 'Sunshine Blue'. Semi-evergreen in warm climates. Prefers acidic soil. Zones 6-10.



**Chinese fairy bells (*Disporum cantoniense* 'Green Giant')** — This magnificent perennial was found and named by noted plant explorer, Dan Hinkley in Sichuan Province, China. Its

bamboo-like shoots emerge in shades of pink, white and green, maturing to deep green. Fragrant, creamy-white flowers unfurl like nodding bells with the new growth each spring; flowers are followed by glistening black fruit in fall. Zones 7-9.



**Pink Double Dandy Itoh peony (*Paeonia* × 'Pink Double Dandy')** — The large, semi-double to double flower measures up to six inches and is held on strong stems above a compact mound of 24 to

30 inches tall and wide, dark green foliage. As the flower matures, the dark lavender pink petals slowly fade to a soft pink, revealing a cluster of yellow stamens in its center. The flower is lightly fragrant. Prefers full sun to dappled shade. Hybridized by Don Smith, a leading Itoh Peony breeder. Zones 4-8.

**Blue Balloon® bluebeard (*Caryopteris* × *clandonensi* 'Korball')**



— As the name indicates, this deciduous shrub is spherical in habit, like a blue balloon when in full bloom. Striking deep blue flowers appear from early summer through

September and are attractive to butterflies and bumblebees. The leaves, dark green with silvery hairs beneath, emit a lavender fragrance. Tolerant of most soils, but prefers well-drained soil and full sun. Zones 6-9.

**Jock Demme**  
Iseli Nursery  
Boring, Ore.



***Picea pungens* 'Sester Dwarf'** — Its stunning blue needles, slow growth rate, and classic conical form, make this dwarf spruce an ideal specimen for the small residential landscape or rock garden. With one-

fourth the growth rate of its large sized parent, this selection is the perfect diminutive form of a Colorado blue spruce. With a growth rate of 3-6 inches per year, full sun and moist, well-drained soil are best.



***Abies koreana* 'Cis'** — Dark green, flat needles that radiate from the stems in a spoke-like fashion provide a backdrop for attractive, small, brown buds at the branch tips. This spherical plant has a formal, tidy appearance and

glistening foliage that draws attention in the garden. Growing 2-3 inches per year, it does best in cooler climates with full sun or part shade, and moist, well-drained soil.



***Taxus cuspidata* 'Nana Aureascens'** — Eye-catching golden yellow growth radiates visual warmth, gradually becoming a contrasting dark green base as next year's new growth shades the older needles. In northern climates this sunny

yellow beauty does well in full sun. In slightly hotter, sunnier climates, we recommend partial shade or full sun in the early morning with shade in the afternoon. Growing 3-6 inches per year, 'Nana Aureascens' leisurely increases in height as it slowly widens, eventually becoming wider than tall.



***Pinus contorta* 'Taylor's Sunburst'** — Brilliant, golden-yellow, new growth erupts in spring and makes 'Taylor's Sunburst' a vibrant show-stopper. The striking color lasts for weeks, then gradually softens to a

light, yellow-green as the foliage hardens. Red pollen cones add contrast to this extraordinary lodgepole pine that was introduced by Alan Taylor, who found it high in the Colorado Rockies. Thriving in full sun and moist, well-drained soil, it grows 6-12 inches per year.

## ▲ TOUGH, BUT BEAUTIFUL

and prune sculpted/topiary trees.

Blue Heron Farm Nursery, a wholesale grower in Independence, Ore., provides the more commodity-type junipers for large commercial jobs, especially in drier parts of the country. Manager Amie Oliveira said demand is "fairly steady, but a little on-again/off-again."

Groundcover junipers tend to sell in big numbers, she said, several hundred to thousands at a time. Some of the junipers that sell well to landscapers, re-wholesalers and box stores are 'Blue Star,' 'Sea Green,' 'Moonglow,' 'Skyrocket,' 'Gold Star' and 'Gold Lace.'

### A gallery of junipers recommended by Monrovia and Iseli nurseries

Low, spreading or prostrate junipers make exceptional groundcovers and provide erosion control in difficult positions.

#### Blue

***Juniperus horizontalis* 'Wiltonii'** (Zone 3) — Known as the blue rug juniper, 'Wiltonii' produces a very low mat of long, trailing branches. Its dense, blue-green foliage takes on plum tones in winter. "'Wiltonii' is an old, old, widely grown parent cultivar," Demme said. Iseli Nursery sells it only in 4-inch pots as part of its Fanciful Gardens collection of plants appropriate for trough and rock gardens. "It can live in a trough for many years," he said, "or look good spilling over walls and around water features."

***Juniperus squamata* 'Blue Star'** (Zone 4) — 'Blue Star' is an "immensely popular juniper," Demme said. Introduced in 1964, it was not widely produced until about 1984, when it suddenly became "a very hot commodity and automatic sale," he said. Demme credited the popularity of dwarf conifers as garden plants in part to 'Blue Star.' "'Blue Star' helped put the Oregon nursery industry on the map," Demme said. Its garden appeal is bright blue foliage and a nice shape; it lives almost anywhere, although it can be crushed by heavy, wet snow.

***Juniperus horizontalis* 'Blue Pygmy'** (Zone 4) — This miniature selection

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has a congested, compact habit and bluish green foliage that make it an excellent choice for trough, alpine or rock garden. "It takes forever to grow," Demme said.

Blue Creeper® juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum* 'Monam' PP 5084) (Zone 3) — Introduced by Monrovia Nursery in 1986, Blue Creeper is "tough as a bucket of nails," Staddon said. Native to high elevation in the Rocky Mountains, it is adapted to inhospitable conditions and makes a useful ground-cover for banks fighting erosion. Steel blue foliage develops a more intense color in winter.

Icee Blue® juniper (*Juniperus horizontalis* 'Monber' PP 9639) (Zone 3) — "An absolute smoker," Staddon said. "Best silver blue winter color of the groundcover junipers." A chance discovery in a group of 'Wiltoni' with brighter blue, this cultivar does not brown out in the center as others do. Monrovia grows it both as a prostrate plant and as a cascading patio tree to show off the striking blue foliage. The slow-growing plant works well in a container too and holds its color well in high heat and humidity. Winter color is even more icy.

### Green

*Juniperus communis* 'Corielagen' (Zone 3) — This prostrate common juniper from Scotland is tough and durable with densely packed, sharp, spiky foliage. Long, flexible branches reach out in all directions and carpet the ground more quickly than 'Green Carpet,' Demme said. It is a nice, clean, adaptable alternative with a less formal habit than 'Green Carpet.'

*Juniperus communis* 'Green Carpet' (Zone 3) — Compact, spreading and extremely hardy, this tidy, bright green juniper performs well even in shade.

Alpine Carpet® juniper (*Juniperus communis* 'Mondap') Zone 3 — Introduced by Monrovia in 1999, the unique, prostrate form of common



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Alpine Carpet® juniper was introduced by Monrovia in 1999, and has softer foliage than most cultivars. It is extremely hardy, and does well in harsh environments. It tolerates thin soils, dry climates and cold.



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'Gold Strike' juniper has been a brisk seller for Iseli Nursery since it was introduced two years ago. It is a seedling selection from the mother lode juniper.



RANDALL C. SMITH / ISELI NURSERY

*Juniperus horizontalis* 'Wiltonii' has served as the parent for several other noted juniper cultivars.



RANDALL C. SMITH / ISELI NURSERY

*Juniperus horizontalis* 'Golden Carpet' is more muted than 'Mother Lode' or 'Gold Strike.'

juniper has softer foliage and works well both en masse and alone. Staddon suggests using it in contrasting containers in entries or walkways where year-round decoration is needed.

Calgary Carpet® juniper (*Juniperus sabina* 'Monna') Zone 3 — Discovered in Calgary long ago by a Monrovia customer, this very low, spreading groundcover with soft green foliage holds up well to the tough, desiccating winters of Canada and the Rocky Mountain states. Only 6-9 inches tall, it tolerates heat, cold and drought and spreads out 10 feet.

### Gold

"Gold is important to accentuate other colors, to draw the eye and to provide balance in a garden design," Staddon said.

*Juniperus horizontalis* 'Mother Lode' (Zone 3) — Discovered at Iseli Nursery in 1982 as a sport on 'Wiltonii', 'Mother Lode' is famous for its "dramatic seasonal color changes," Demme said. Yellow in summer, multi-tone and burgundy plum in winter, the slow-growing plant stays extremely flat and lends big-time interest to the garden. One of many introductions from Iseli Nursery, it remains a viable production item for the nursery.

*Juniperus horizontalis* 'Gold Strike' (Zone 3) — Newest in the trade, this Iseli introduction is a seedling selection from 'Mother Lode.' It performs best in moist, well-drained soil, protected from scorching sun. Vivid yellow foliage softens with coral tones in winter. On the market only two years, demand is good, Demme said, and Iseli is still working on fulfillment.

*Juniperus horizontalis* 'Golden Carpet' (Zone 3) — More vigorous and dense than 'Mother Lode', this golden carpeting juniper has an interesting habit: streamers of new growth appear to float over the body of the plant and creep beyond the edges. It has a more muted, almost pastel look to it and is





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good choice for a shadier site. "We like it a lot," Demme said.

*Juniperus horizontalis* 'Limeglow'™ (Zone 3) — Amazing "electric char-treuse" feathery foliage makes this selection from North Carolina State University unique. In the cold of winter, the low, spreading plant takes on plum purple tones.

**Larger junipers**

Mid-size, vase-shaped shrub junipers also cover ground and control erosion but provide a larger profile. Sometimes the larger junipers outgrow their spaces, but these choices offer unique characteristics that warrant their inclusion in the landscape.

**Green**

*Juniperus chinensis* 'Shimpaku' (Zone 4) — Upright, fountain-like branches, irregular form and outstanding, peeling bark produce ancient-looking bonsai specimens when crafted by bonsai artists. The spreading, vase-shaped plant also makes an interesting addition to container arrangements and garden beds.

**Gold**

Sea Of Gold® juniper (*Juniperus × pfitzeriana* 'MonSan' PP 17622) (Zone 3) — Monrovia searched for a golden plant that did not burn in scorching summers and honed in on this chance discovery from 'Gold Coast.' In production now for about five years, the compact, mid-size juniper boasts dazzling gold, feathery foliage that deepens in winter better than other gold-tipped varieties. Staddon notes that the gold foliage makes a dramatic color statement when planted with red roses or blue caryopteris. Upright, narrow columnar junipers make great hedges, vertical accents and topiary.

**Blue**

*Juniperus virginiana* 'Blue Arrow' (COPF) — Tight, bright blue foliage and a very narrow, upright form characterize this improved selection of 'Skyrocket.'

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*Juniperus virginiana* 'Taylor' — Staddon is very enthusiastic about this significantly improved selection. It has a tight columnar habit that is much more dense than similar plants. It holds up a heavy under snow load and tolerates desiccating winds. The Nebraska Statewide Arboretum introduction is a sport of an Eastern red cedar found in Taylor, Neb.

**Gold**

*Juniperus communis* 'Brynhyfryd Gold' (Zone 4) — Dwarf and slow growing, this upright narrow plant is appropriate for even the smallest landscape or trough, where it can grow for decades without outgrowing its spot, Demme said. The new Scottish selection is a variation of 'Compressa' that has yellow growth tips in spring. Foliage matures to blue-green in summer. Best color in full sun. ☺

*Elizabeth Petersen writes for gardeners and garden businesses, coaches students and writers, and tends a one-acre garden in West Linn, Ore. She can be reached at gardenwrite@comcast.net.*



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