



PHOTOS BY CHRIS RUSCH

Each needle of the deodar cedar is 1 to 2 inches long and is produced in bundles of 10 to 20 needles. All are bluish-green or grayish-green in color.

**Q**uestion: I would like to plant a deodar cedar in our home landscape. What can you tell me about this beautiful tree and its care? Why is it called a “true” cedar? Can you explain the difference between “true” cedars and “false” cedars?

**Answer:** Cedar (*Cedrus*), also called “true” cedar, is a coniferous genus and species of trees in the plant family Pinaceae. The deodar cedar (*Cedrus deodora*) falls into this genus. Most true, old-world cedars seen in North America are ornamentals and, like the deodar cedar, include the cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) and the Atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*).

“False” cedars, on the other hand, are in the family Cupressaceae, and mostly in the following genera: *Calocedrus*, *Chamaecyparis* and *Thuja*. They have tiny scale-like foliage and small cones. Common names include incense cedar, western red cedar and Port-Orford cedar.

All are Oregon natives and are commonly planted in the Pacific Northwest.

The deodar cedar (*Cedrus deodara*), also known as Himalayan cedar, is



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one of the “true” cedars. It is a species of cedar native to the western Himalayas in Eastern Afghanistan, Northern Pakistan and India. The deodar cedar is the national tree of Pakistan. The name deodar evolved from the word *devadāru*, which is a Sanskrit word that translates to “timber of the gods.” The tree is sacred in Hinduism.

The deodar cedar is an evergreen conifer tree that is favored for its weeping habit and gracefully drooping branches. It is often used as a specimen tree in parks and other large gardens and can also be used to line streets. Each needle on this conifer is 1-2 inches long and can be bluish-green or grayish-green, depending on the cultivar. They are produced in bundles of 10 to 20 needles. They also appear individually on long shoots.

Their large, barrel-shaped cones stick up above their branches, and have thin scales that fall apart when matured

(similar to true firs).

The best time to plant your deodar cedar sapling is in the early spring months or in the fall once the plant has gone dormant in preparation for winter. When planting, dig a hole that’s at least three times as wide as the tree’s root ball. Add 25% compost, peat or aged manure to the soil to help it drain, put the root ball in the hole and return the soil and organic mix to surround the tree. Tamp the soil lightly and water it thoroughly.

A planting site with full sun is best for this evergreen tree, though it can tolerate partial shade. Deodar cedar trees can be grown in a wide variety of soil types, including loam, sand and clay, as long as that soil is well-drained. Check to make sure that your soil offers good drainage because this species likes moist soil but cannot tolerate wet feet.

Give the tree plenty of water during the first few growing seasons. Once established, deodar cedars are somewhat drought-resistant. Of all the cedar trees, the deodar cedar has the best tolerance for summer heat. Fertilize the ground around the tree in the spring months before

new growth begins. Don’t fertilize the cedar more than once per year, as too much nitrogen can cause root burn.

Deodar cedar is a low-maintenance tree. The only pruning that is usually needed is to remove any branches that have become dead, damaged or diseased before new growth begins in the spring. If you need to prune, take extreme care – it’s easy to cut away too much green that won’t grow back, which could lead to the tree’s death.

The deodar cedar grows at a moderate pace, adding 1-2 feet per year to reach between 40 and 50 feet tall, though it can reach 150 feet in its native setting. The tree needs all that space because of its beautiful weeping branches, which will grow and spread. Avoid planting the tree in areas that get a lot of wind.

There are several varieties of deodar cedar to choose from:

■ *Cedrus deodara Albospica*: A slow-growing cultivar with white or silver foliage

■ *C. deodara Aurea*: Features horizontal branches and golden needles; first described by botanist J. Nelson in 1866



The deodar cedar is often used in parks and large gardens. Native to the western Himalayas in Eastern Afghanistan, Northern Pakistan and India, the deodar cedar is sacred in Hinduism.

■ *C. deodara Feelin’ Blue*: Also a dwarf variety, features blue-green foliage and weeping branches; grows to about 6 feet tall and wide

■ *C. deodara Kashmir*: Showcases silvery blue-green foliage and can tolerate below-zero temperature

■ *C. deodara Shalimar*: Features a blue-green hue and excellent hardiness

The inner wood of the deodar cedar is aromatic and used to make incense. Other parts of the tree can be distilled into essential oils. As insects avoid this tree, one use of the essential oil is as insect repellent.

*Do you have a gardening question? Please email the Douglas County Master Gardener Plant Clinic at [douglasmg@oregonstate.edu](mailto:douglasmg@oregonstate.edu).*