True Cedars

Genus Characteristics

Leaves: Cedar needles are borne in clusters on spurs, with new growth borne singly. Spurs are short woody stubs orginating from the branch. Needles are whorled. Foliage and branches are very fragrant when crushed. Length and coloration of needles are important for species ID.

Cedrus atlantica 'Glauca'

Cedrus deodara

Fruit: Female cones are large, barrel-shaped and mature over 2 seasons. Cones sit upright on branches and can be prolific on the tree. Cones disintegrate at maturity, similar to fir cones. Large, abundant male pollen cones mature in late summer/early autumn.

Cedrus atlantica

Cedrus libani

Bark: Bark is thin, silvery-grey, and scaly. Furrows and scales develop with age.

Cedrus atlantica

Cedrus deodara

Form: True cedars are large trees, often maturing to over 100 feet tall with significant DBH. Branches are broad and level, often spaced to appear like scaffolding. Form is open and broad.

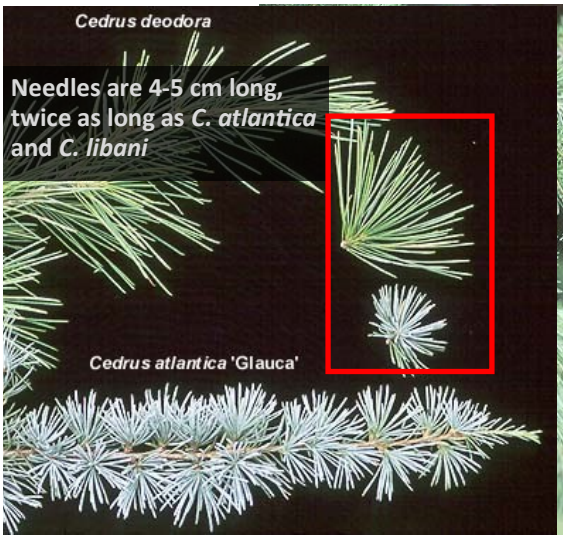
Cedrus libani

Cedrus atlantica

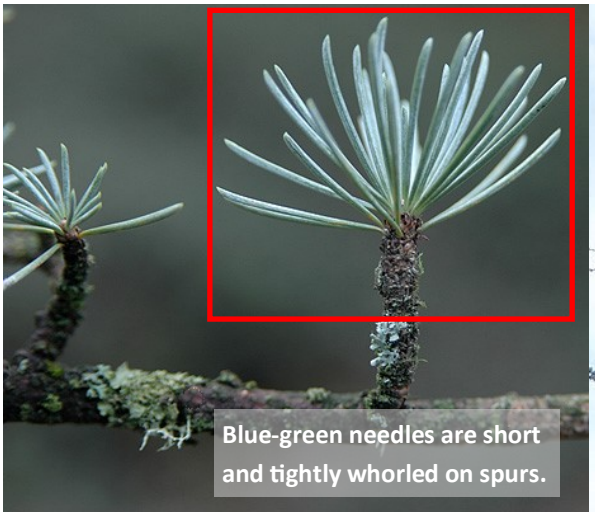
Cedrus deodara

True Cedars

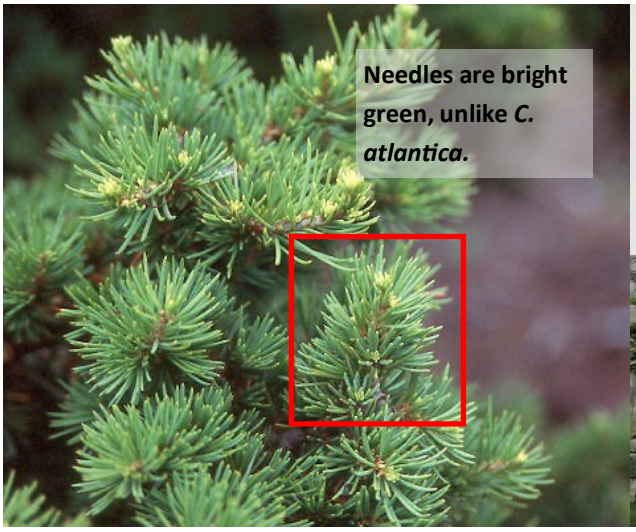
Cedrus deodara—Deodar cedar



Cedrus atlantica 'Glauca'— Atlas cedar



Cedrus libani—Cedar-of-Lebanon



Atlas cedar and Cedar-of-Lebanon are so closely related that many consider Atlas cedar to be a subspecies of Cedar-of-Lebanon. Atlas cedar is blue and more commonly planted than Cedar-of-Lebanon. If you are unsure, take a sample! If Urban Forestry staff is stumped, we'll send it to the experts at Hoyt Arboretum.