



Juniper - *Juniperus communis* 'hinernica'.



Keep an eye on our young Juniper bushes planted in Autumn 2022. They may take a year or two before they develop the characteristic black berries.

Common juniper is an evergreen shrub. The 'hinernica' variety is more upright than the standard *Juniperus communis*.

The leaves take the form of needles in whorls of three. They have a single pale band on the upper surface and are grey-green beneath. The fruits look like berries - at first green but ripening to black. However, Juniper is a conifer and the apparent berries are formed by fusion of fleshy cone scales. They can take up to 3 years to develop.

Common juniper is dioecious, meaning that male and female flowers grow on separate trees. The male flowers are small, yellow and globular, and grow in leaf axils near the tips of twigs. The female flowers are barely visible but ripen to form the black berries used in the flavouring of gin.

A group of four Juniper saplings were donated to FSW in September 2022. They had been propagated by the Downlands Project and were ready for planting into the wood. There had been no Juniper in Selsdon Wood previously but as this is a native tree, common on chalk downs, its introduction would be appropriate. Juniper has been declining throughout the UK in range and abundance. It is not known exactly why, but it appears that the plants are unable to regenerate successfully, a problem partially attributed to browsing of foliage by deer and rabbits.

Its value to the biodiversity of the wood would be that it is the food plant for caterpillars of many species of moth and a number of birds eat the fruit.

After discussion it was decided that the best place for them would be the northerly end of David's Crook where they would get plenty of sun.

On a Work Session in November the work team visited David's Crook to plant the Junipers. After the saplings were in position they were staked for support and a Netlon cage was placed around them to dissuade deer from nibbling. There was only enough Netlon for two of the four saplings - we will see how the uncaged pair survive.

Look out for the Junipers when walking in the wood and watch their development from small saplings.



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Working to improve our wood

