

## November EcoQuest – Jumpin’ Junipers

With fall here, most of our plants are now finished flowering until next year. While it might seem like there are no more plants to observe, this is far from true! One plant that stays green year-round are junipers. Junipers, in the genus *Juniperus*, are conifers (gymnosperms), and as such produce seed cones instead of flowers. There are two species of junipers along the Front Range – *Juniperus scopulorum* (Rocky Mountain juniper) and *Juniperus communis* (common juniper). Both produce round, bluish seed cones that are usually referred to as “berries.”

The two juniper species are easy to tell apart. *Juniperus communis* is a low-growing shrub with spreading branches and leaves, while *J. scopulorum* is an upright tree with appressed, scalelike leaves. Common juniper is found throughout forests and woodlands. Enjoy gin? Well, gin gets its distinctive flavor from common juniper seed cones! In fact,

the name gin is derived from the Dutch *jenever*, which means “juniper.” *Juniperus communis* even has the distinction of being the most widespread conifer in the world and is the only juniper species that occurs in both North America and Eurasia.

Rocky Mountain juniper is common in the foothills and is often found with Gambel oak or in rocky places. In fact, its scientific name translates to “juniper of the mountains.” Rocky Mountain juniper is common throughout the western U.S.

Help Denver Botanic Gardens document the range of these junipers by photographing as many *Juniperus* as possible in the month of November. Remember to post only native or naturalized plants, not cultivated trees or shrubs. Post your findings to [iNaturalist](#) so they will be automatically added to the [Denver EcoFlora Project](#).



(TOP) *Juniperus scopulorum*, [aeion](#), some rights reserved, CC BY-NC 4.0, (BOTTOM) *Juniperus communis*, [sejurca](#), some rights reserved, CC BY-NC 4.0.

## October EcoQuest Results – Rabbitbrush Roundup

Our rabbitbrush roundup resulted in 71 observations – 66 of *Ericameria nauseosa* (rubber rabbitbrush), five of *Gutierrezia sarothrae* (broom snakeweed). No observations of *Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus* (yellow rabbitbrush) were made in October.

### What is an EcoQuest?

EcoQuests are part of the Denver EcoFlora Project. These monthly quests challenge citizens to become citizen scientists and observe, study and conserve the native plants of the Denver – Boulder metro area via iNaturalist, an easy-to-use mobile app.

### How Do I Get Started?

1. Download the iNaturalist app or register online at [iNaturalist.org](#).
2. Take photos of the plants in bloom that you find on your daily neighborhood walk. It is okay if they are weeds! Avoid taking photos of cultivated plants in gardens or in your home.

3. If you are concerned about revealing the location of sensitive plants or observations at your own house, you can hide the exact location from the public by changing the “geoprivacy” of the observation to “obscured.”
4. Post your findings on iNaturalist via the app.
5. Your observations will automatically be added to the Denver EcoFlora Project.
6. Sign up to be a member of the [Denver EcoFlora Project](#) on iNaturalist to receive updates and additional information.

### What is the Goal?

The Denver EcoFlora Project is designed to meaningfully connect citizens with biodiversity and to assemble novel observations and data on the metro area’s flora to better inform policy decisions and conservation strategies.



Photo by Scott Dressel-Martin