

## Current Status - UK and Local

UK Biodiversity Status: Priority Species

LBAP Partnership Area Status: Local Priority Species

Juniper is widely distributed throughout the northern hemisphere but in the UK its distribution, although widespread, is discontinuous, with two main centres: the Scottish Highlands and the chalk downs of southern England. Today in the LBAP Partnership area Juniper is only known from four sites, all within the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park (CMRP). At three of these sites it is represented by single specimens, two of which are low growing but cover a large area, with some apparent layering. At the fourth site there are two isolated bushes. Of the five known plants only one is known to be female, and two other individuals have been identified as male. There is little specific data on former distribution although Henny's *Clydesdale Flora* (1891) describes it as frequent, in woods and heaths, but only mentions Gourrock as a locality; this statement is repeated by Lee in his *Flora of the Clyde Area* (1933).

## Ecology and Management

Juniper is a dioecious (separate sexes), perennial shrub and is one of three Gymnosperms (conifers and related species) native to Britain, the others being Scots Pine and Yew. It is divided into two subspecies, *ssp. communis*, which occurs in the LBAP Partnership area, and *ssp. nana*, which is restricted to montane areas of northwest Britain. It appears to be tolerant of a wide range of soil and climatic conditions and is generally considered to be a successional shrub, opportunistic in its pattern of establishment although it can occur under woodland in NE Scotland.

## Factors Causing Loss or Decline

Data at the national Biological Records Centre (BRC) suggests that since 1960 there has been a 60% decline in the national distribution of Juniper. Although there is little local data available, it appears likely that Juniper has declined markedly since last century and is now very rare, and on the verge of extinction in the local area. It is only known from one locality in Lanarkshire and the nearest Greater Glasgow locality is to the north of Milngavie.

The decline is most likely due to excessive grazing and burning, particularly relevant at the extant LBAP area sites, which can prevent the establishment of young bushes. These ongoing management factors, along with the apparent old age of the surviving individuals, geographical isolation and dioecious breeding system, decrease the likelihood of successful regeneration.

## Opportunities and Current Action

Surveys are being carried out by local and national agencies at sites throughout Britain, and many Juniper sites are included within designated sites. Juniper occurs in a number of habitat types listed under the EC Habitats Directive and Juniper scrub has been recognised as a nationally scarce woodland type. An action group involving SNH, FC, Highland Birchwoods, Scottish Agricultural College, NTS and Plantlife has been set up to increase interest in and develop management prescriptions for montane scrub woodland.

Recent work by the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI), Paisley Natural History Society (PNHS) and Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park (CMRP) has established the sex of three of the relic bushes and attempted cross-pollination. Vegetative cuttings of the male Junipers have been planted out at the site of the female Juniper. Ongoing actions have been reported in the local press and further work is to be undertaken.

## Action Plan

Key priorities are to ensure the survival of the remaining shrubs and to encourage further surveys to establish true population distribution. The current known populations are within the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park and so could benefit from management agreements with local land users and the staff resources to enable sufficient monitoring. Liaison with farmers and landowners over the existence of relic sites or access for new surveys will be necessary outside of the park.



Inverclyde  
Renfrewshire  
East Renfrewshire  
LBAP



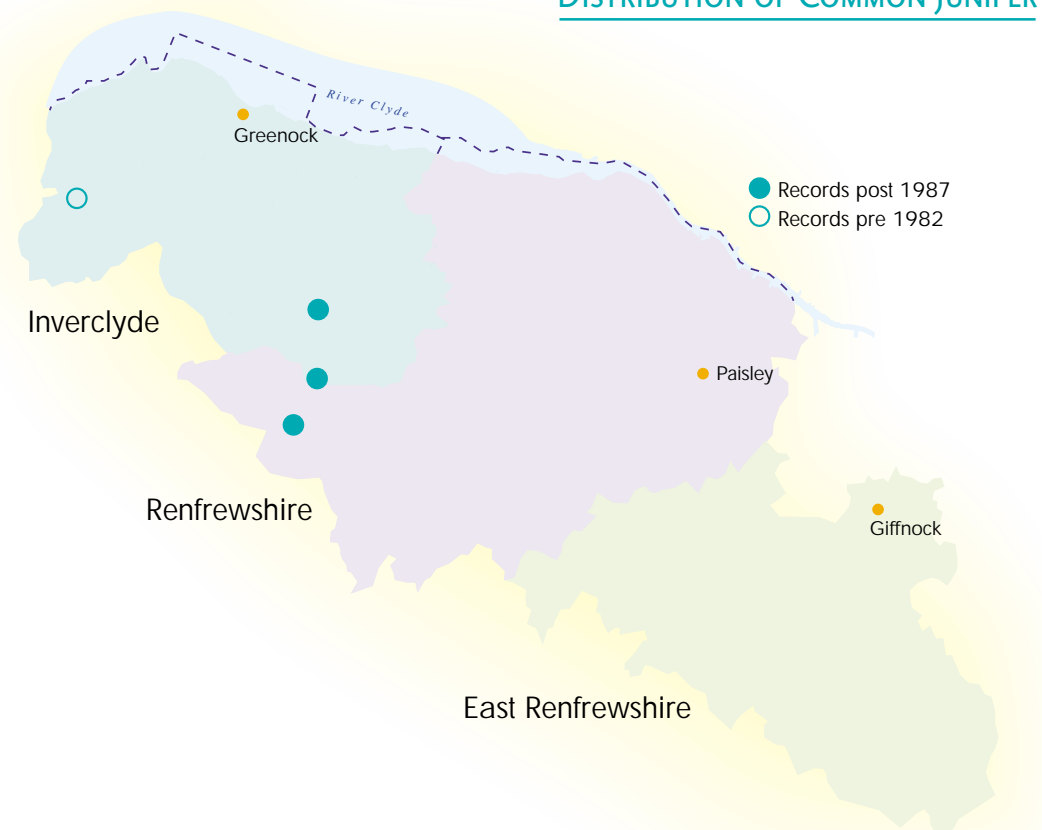
Common Juniper © Lorne Gill/SNH

# COMMON JUNIPER

(*Juniperus communis*)

Juniper is a low growing, blue-grey, hardy conifer. The form of individual bushes is very varied with feathery foliage. The cones, which resemble berries, were used medicinally and for flavouring Gin. The wood was burned for its sweet smell, and the plant was also traditionally used for warding off evil. It was one of the first tree species to colonise Britain after the last glacial period.

## DISTRIBUTION OF COMMON JUNIPER



## Objectives and Targets

- Objective 1 Maintain the viability of the relic individuals.
- Objective 2 Introduce appropriate management to encourage regeneration.
- Objective 3 Re-establish populations at known former or suitable new localities.
- Objective 4 Establish current distribution and population status.
- Objective 5 Review this plan on an annual basis, beginning in 2005.

We will achieve these objectives by:

Action	Actioned by	Timescale
Ensuring no loss or damage to the surviving plants	FC LAs FWAG	2004/07
Encouraging regeneration at all known sites	BSBI CMRP	2004/07
Establishing new sites at appropriate locations	BSBI CMRP	2004/07
Identifying suitable sites for potential reintroduction and carrying out surveys of these and known historic sites	BSBI CMRP	2004/07
Monitoring and recording actions towards these objectives	LBAP Steering Group LBAP Officer Local Records Centre	Ongoing / annual
Co-ordinating with National Plan and encouraging study of genetic diversity	BSBI LBAP Officer	Ongoing

## Links with Other Action Plans

Dwarf Shrub Heath, Unimproved Grasslands.

Further Information can be obtained from The Biodiversity Officer 0141 842 5281

