

Taxonomic position and geographical variation of *Juniperus drupacea* Labill.

Juniperus drupacea is a species native to the eastern Mediterranean region. It can be found in southern Greece (Parnon Oros, Peloponnese), southern Turkey, western Syria and Lebanon. The tree, sometimes a shrub, is up to 12-18 (23) m high, with very rigid leaves and large cones of 20-25 mm in diameter. Its cone is characterized by a single “stone” with three seeds fused together. Taxonomic position of *Juniperus drupacea* has not been clarified so far. Currently, *J. drupacea* is placed in the monotypic section *Caryocedrus* (because of three seeds fused together and the fact that microstrobiles are produced in clusters) or in the section *Juniperus* (= *Oxycedrus*) (if the fusion of the seed-coats is considered to be a secondary feature). So far no one has published detailed studies about this taxon. In the literature, we can meet only a brief description of this species and information about research on essential oils. Thus, the aim of this work is to present (i) both the morphological and genetic variation of *Juniperus drupacea* in its natural range, and (ii) the differences between *Juniperus drupacea*, *Juniperus oxycedrus* subsp. *oxycedrus* and *J. o.* subsp. *macrocarpa*.¹² Populations of *Juniperus drupacea* from Greece, Turkey and Lebanon were examined. For comparisons 3 populations of *Juniperus oxycedrus* subsp. *macrocarpa* from Spain, Italy and Turkey and 2 populations of *Juniperus oxycedrus* subsp. *oxycedrus* from Maroko and Greece were used. 26 characters of cones, leaves, “stones” and stomata were used for morphological analyses. The analysis of genetic differentiation was based on variation of three microsatellite markers of nuclear DNA : Jc 035, Jc 037, Jc 032.

The results show a clear geographical variation within *Juniperus drupacea*. The comparison of *Juniperus drupacea* and two subspecies of *Juniperus oxycedrus* reveals a distinct difference between *Juniperus drupacea* and *Juniperus oxycedrus* subsp. *oxycedrus*. An intermediate character of *Juniperus oxycedrus* subsp. *macrocarpa* between the two previously mentioned taxa was detected.