

The Flowering Crab Apple – A Pacific Northwest Beauty

The flowering crab apple, a versatile but vastly underused tree, is preferable to members of the prunus family as an ornamental. The prunus trees, such as flowering cherry and flowering plum, are problematic in our damp cool climate, which encourages fungal and bacterial diseases. The newly developed cultivars of flowering crab apple are free of some of the objectionable problems of the older varieties such as defoliation due to apple scab fungus and unpleasant litter.

Because of the many sizes and shapes, such as weeping, semi-weeping, spreading, and upright, one may now find the right tree for any garden regardless of space limitations. Colors range from dark red, to pink and white. Some flowering crab apples can provide nearly year-round interest. Attractive bloom periods, colorful foliage, and fruit remaining on the tree for most of the winter months, provide seasonal beauty and fine food for birds. In addition, some varieties are good for making cider, jelly, or a spiced condiment.

If you have room in your garden for several flowering crab apple trees you might want to select cultivars that bloom at different times in order to extend the blooming period. When selecting cultivars, the most important consideration is disease-resistance. It is also important to research the size and shape of the tree to fit the planting site in your garden.

A few cultivars that are choice in this part of the Pacific Northwest are:

- 'Louisa' – pink bloom and strongly weeping branches
- 'Golden Raindrop' – cut leaf foliage, small golden fruit
- 'Prairifire' – deep red, long lasting blooms
- *Malus baccata* 'Jackii' – tall, with an early white bloom
- 'Winter Gem' – narrow, upright form
- 'Professor Sprenger' – great fall and winter color
- 'Evereste' – semi weeping, and large abundant fruit

For more information ask for Extension Bulletin 1809, *Crabapples for Western Washington Landscapes*. This bulletin provides assistance in choosing the best tree for your requirements. It will also list varieties you should avoid in our Pacific Northwest gardens. All of these varieties are pictured in EB 1809.