

Crabapples are versatile, small, ornamental trees used in the urban landscape. Crabapples bloom in spring, usually in May, bearing flowers that vary a great deal in color, size, fragrance, and visual appeal. It is common for flower buds to be red, opening to pink or white flowers. The fruit ripens between July and November, and varies in size from ¼” to 2” long or wide. Crabapples thrive in full sun and grow best in well drained, slightly acidic soils (pH 5.5-6.5); however, they will grow well in many soil types. Most crabapple selections tolerate the cold winters and hot, dry summers prevalent in the Midwest.

For many years, crabapple cultivars have been selected on the basis of their flowers, but with some cultivars, undesirable features, such as disease problems and early fruit drop, outweigh their short-lived spring beauty. No single cultivar can fulfill every landscaping need. Consider the following information when choosing a crabapple cultivar for your landscape.

DISEASE

Disease resistance should be your first consideration. Many resistant cultivars are available and recommended in order to avoid the most common disease problems. Before making a selection, keep in mind that not all crabapples do well in every location. Disease intensity varies from region to region, and disease strength can vary from year to year. For instance, some crabapples will be more prone to disease susceptibility in areas with greater rainfall than in drier climates. Careful consideration of the following information will be helpful in choosing the right crabapple cultivar. There are four diseases that seriously affect crabapple:

Apple scab is one of the most serious diseases from an aesthetic standpoint, but usually not a serious threat to the health of the tree. It is a fungal disease, which develops in cool, wet springs. On susceptible crabapples, apple scab causes spotting of the leaves, premature defoliation, and unsightly spots on the fruit. There are numerous cultivars that are resistant or very tolerant (still susceptible but with little defoliation) so choose one based on its resistance.

Cedara-apple rust is a less serious leaf-spotting disease common to our native crabapple cultivars. It is usually a problem in areas where native junipers (*Juniperus*) are planted. Selecting resistant cultivars can control this disease.

Powdery mildew is a fungal disease that can cause considerable damage to leaves and fruit of susceptible cultivars without threatening the health of the tree. Poor air circulation, close association with susceptible apple cultivars, and wet, humid weather conditions will greatly influence disease incidence and severity.

Fire blight is a serious bacterial disease of crabapples. Though it is less common than the others, if left untreated it can be fatal to susceptible crabapple cultivars. Select resistant cultivars.

PRUNING CRABAPPLES

Light pruning may be necessary to keep plants healthy, improve form, and correct structural problems. Prune in late winter or just after flowering. Remove dead, diseased, or broken branches at any time. Occasional thinning of the crown allows light into the center of the tree, and is done by removing a few smaller branches back to a crotch. Heavy cuts of one-inch or more should be avoided since they induce excessive water-sprout growth that will ultimately fill in the tree center. Suckers from the base of the trunk are problems with many types of crabapples and should be pruned as close to the ground as possible each season. It is important to disinfect pruning tools after each cut since pathogens can be spread by pruning tools. Sterilize using 70% denatured alcohol or 1 part household bleach mixed with 9 parts water.

SIZE AND FORM

Crabapples vary greatly in their shape and size. The mature size of the plant should be considered in your selection. The size of the landscape and the surrounding structures will dictate the plant size for a given space. There are several basic forms to consider:

- shrub (up to 15ft. tall)
- columnar (tall and narrow)
- horizontal (layered branches, usually wider than tall)
- oval (taller than wide)
- upright (25’-30’ tall)
- rounded or spreading (usually somewhat wider than tall)
- weeping (little variation within the desirable cultivars, all grow to about 15ft.)

FRUIT

Trees only produce fruit after they have had flowers. The ornamental fruit of a crabapple puts on a show during the fall and winter. Fruits vary from less than ¼” to 2” in diameter. By definition, *Malus* trees with fruit larger than 2” are not crabapples, but apples. The best crabapple selections have small fruit, less than one-half inch, with bright, attractive colors (red, orange, and yellow). Some cultivars have showy fruits after hard frost, persisting (staying on the tree) throughout the winter, and providing food for birds. A few cultivars alternate every other year in flowering and bearing fruit, while some produce heavily one year and lighter the next. The non-persistent cultivars often produce fruit that can create an unwanted mess, especially when located near a driveway or sidewalk.

FLOWERS

Although flowers are usually the first consideration when choosing a crabapple, they should be one of the last. Flowering period is usually short, with bloom length dependent on the weather. Flowers may be single, double, or semi-double and colors vary from white, pink, or red. Flowers also have three distinct stages when blooming, from tight bud to balloon, and full bloom, often changing color with each stage. The crabapple recommendations are based on research at The Morton Arboretum as well as other locations in the Midwest as part of the National Crabapple Evaluation study.

RECOMMENDED CRABAPPLES for the HOME LANDSCAPE

Flower and fruit colors are general guidelines; exact colors may vary slightly between cultivars, soil type, and other growing conditions.

Disease resistance key: **E**=excellent resistance **G**=good/slight
 F=fair/susceptible **P**=poor resistance

* Persistent Fruit

† Alternate bearing fruit

Name	Height Width	Form	Bud/Flowers	Fruit	Disease Resistance			
					Scab	Fire	Rust	Mildew
‘Adams’	20/20	Rounded	Dark Pink/Rose	Dark Red*	F	E	F	F
‘Adirondack’	12/6	Columnar	Red/White	Orange Red	E	E	E	E
‘Amberina’	12/12	Upright	Red/White	Orange Red*	F	E	E	E
baccata ‘jackii’	30/40	Up/Rounded	White	Purplish-red	E	F	E	F
‘Beverly’	20/20	Up/Spreading	Red/White	Red†	E	F	E	E
‘Bob White’	20/25	Rounded	Pink/White	Yellow*†	G	F	E	G

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Brandywine® 'Branzam'	20/20	Rounded	Red/Pink	Yellow	F	F	P	F
Camelot™ 'Camzam'	10/8	Rounded	Dark Red/Whit	Red	E	E	E	E
'Centennial'	25/20	Rounded	Pink/White	Red-Yellow	E	E	E	E
Centurion® 'Centzam'	20/15	Narrow/Up	Dark Pink/Red	Cherry Red*	F	E	E	E
Coralburst™ 'Coralcole	10/10	Rounded	Coral/Rose	Bronze-yellow	F	E	E	E
'David'	15/15	Rounded	Pink/White	Scarlet Red*†	G	G	E	E
'Dolgo'	40/30	Up/Spreading	Pink/White	Yellow w/ Re	E	G	E	E
'Donald Wyman	20/20	Rounded	Pink/White	Red*	G	E	E	G
'Doubloons'	12/10	Up/Spreading	Red/White	Yellow-Gold	F	E	E	E
floribunda	20/25	Spreading	Carmine/White	Yellow/Red	E	G	G	G
Harvest Gold® 'Hargozam'	20/15	Upright	Pink/White	Golden Yellow	E	F	E	E
hupehensis	25/25	Upright/Spread	Pink/White	Yellow/Red	E	P	E	E
'Indian Magic'	20/15	Rounded	Rose Pink	Red*	P	F	E	E
'Indian Summer'	18/20	Rounded	Rose Red	Red*	F	E	E	E
'Jewelberry'	8/12	Shrub	Pink/White	Red†	F	F	E	E
'Liset'	15/15	Rounded	Crimson/Red	Dark Red	G	F	E	F
'Louisa'	15/15	Weeping	Red/Pink	Yellow	F	E	E	E
'Ludwick'	6/10	Weeping	Dark Pink/Pink	Red	E	E	E	E
'Makamik'	30/40	Rounded	Dark Red/Red	Purplish-red	E	F	E	P
'Mary Potter'	8/18	Shrub	Pink/White	Red	F	F	E	F
Molten Lava™ 'Molazam	12/15	Broad/Weeping	Rose/White	Orange Red*	E	E	F	E
'Ormiston Roy'	20/25	Up/Spreading	Red/White	Orange Yellow	G	F	G	G
Pink Princess™ 'Parsi'	8/12	Low spreading	Rose Pink	Dark Red	F	F	F	F
'Pink Spires'	25/12	Up/Columnar	Pink	Purplish-red	F	P	F	F
'Prairifire'	20/20	Up/Rounded	Red/Dark Red	Purplish-red	E	E	E	E
'Professor Sprenger'	20/20	Up/Spreading	Pink/White	Orange Red*	E	E	E	E
'Profusion'	20/20	Up/Spreading	Red/Rose Pink	Dark Red*	F	F	E	G
'Purple Prince'	18/18	Rounded	Red/Rose Red	Maroon	G	G	E	E
'Radiant'	25/20	Rounded	Red/Dark Pink	Red/Yellow	P	E	G	F
'Ralph Shay'	20/20	Rounded	Pink/White	Red*	F	F	F	E
'Red Barron'	18/10	Columnar	Dark Red/Dark Pink	Maroon	F	G	G	G
'Red Jade'	12/20	Weeping	Red/White	Red*	P	F	F	F

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					Scab	Fire	Rust	Mildew
‘Red Jewel’	18/12	Up/Rounded	Pink/White	Cherry Red*	G	P	E	G
‘Red Splendor’	20/20	Up/Rounded	Rose/Pink	Red*	P	F	G	F
‘Red Swan’	10/14	Weeping	Rose/White	Cherry Red*	G	E	E	E
‘Robinson’	25/25	Up/Spreading	Crimson/Pink	Dark Red*	F	G	G	G
‘Royalty’	20/15	Up/Rounded	Crimson Purple	Red-Purple	P	P	G	F
sargentii	8/15	Spreading/Shr	Pale Pink/Whit	Red*	E	G	E	E
‘Tina’	5/6	Spreading/Shr	Red/White	Red	E	E	E	E
‘Selkirk’	20/25	Up/Spreading	Rose/Pink	Purplish-red	F	F	F	G
‘Sentinel’	18/12	Up/Columnar	Rose Pink/Whi	Dark Red*	F	F	G	G
‘Sinai Fire’	15/15	Up/Weeping	Red/White	Orange-red	E	E	E	E
‘Snowdrift’	20/20	Rounded	Pink/White	Orange-red*	P	P	G	G
‘Spring Snow’	25/22	Up/Oval	White	Spare fruiting	F	F	G	G
‘Strawberry Parf	20/25	Spreading/Vas	Red/Pink	Yellow	E	G	G	E
Sugar Tyme™ ‘Sutyram’	18/15	Up/Spreading	Pale Pink/Whit	Red*	E	G	G	G
Velvet Pillar™ ‘Velvetcole’	20/14	Up/ Columnar	Pink	Red	P	F	F	F
Weeping Candie Apple® ‘Weepcanzam’	10/15	Weeping	Red/Pink	Cherry Red	P	G	E	E
White Angel® ‘Inglis’	20/20	UP/Rounded	Pink/White	Red	G	F	F	G
White Cascade® ‘Cascole’	15/15	Weeping	Pink/White	Yellow*	G	F	P	G
‘Winter Gold’	25/20	Broadly Oval	Red/White	Yellow	F	P	G	G
x zumi	20/18	Pyramidal	Pink/White	Red	G	F	G	G
x zumi ‘Calocarpa’	25/25	Up/Spreading	Red/White	Bright Red*	E	P	G	G
x zumi ‘Wooster’	25/25	Broadly Oval	Coral/White	Orange-red	E	P	G	G