



Indian Hawthorn

Rhaphiolepis indica

Introduction

This slow-growing, small, rounded evergreen shrub is ideal for any sunny garden. The neat, compact growth habit seldom needs pruning and the low profile makes Indian Hawthorn well-suited as dense, large-scale groundcovers, low dividers, or informal hedges. High salt-tolerance makes Indian Hawthorn especially useful for seaside plantings.

General Information

Scientific name: *Rhaphiolepis indica*

Pronunciation: raff-fee-oh-LEPP-piss IN-dick-kuh

Common name(s): Indian Hawthorn

Family: Rosaceae

Plant type: ground cover

USDA hardiness zones: 8 through 11

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: border; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; ground cover; trained as a standard; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size)

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 3 to 7 feet

Spread: 6 to 10 feet

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: pink

Flower characteristic: spring flowering; pleasant fragrance; fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: fleshy

Fruit color: blue

Fruit characteristic: attracts birds

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically ultitrunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: good

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

The rich, grey-green leaves are set off by a profusion of fragrant, loose flower clusters, ranging from white to deep pink, depending upon cultivar, appearing in springtime. A second, less pronounced flower display may be produced in the fall. Flowers are followed months later by somewhat showy, small, purplish-black berries.

Indian Hawthorn does best on well-drained soils and tolerates drought conditions well. Plants will not be as dense or flower well if grown in partial shade. In addition, plants in less than 6 hours sun often lose foliage due to a leaf spot disease. This is a perfect low-maintenance small shrub in the sun. Plant on 3 to 4 foot centers to establish a quick covering, dense planting mass. Be sure that air circulation is good around the plant to prevent leaf spot diseases.

Available cultivars include: 'Ballerina', 1 to 2 feet tall, dark pink flowers; 'Enchantress', dwarf plant that blooms profusely from late winter until early spring; 'Fascination', dense, compact plant with star-shaped springtime flowers, rosecolored with white center; 'Hines Darkleaf' (Bay Breeze) is patented, propagation rights are protected, hardy into zone 8, maroon or green new foliage, dark purple fall color; 'Jack Evans', compact, spreading growth, double pink flowers; 'Snow White', dwarf, spreading growth, white blooms, early spring well into summer; 'Springtime', faster-growing selection with dense, leathery, bronze green foliage and profuse pink flowers from late winter to mid-spring. *Raphiolepis indica rosea* has pink flowers and more compact habit, good for areas with hot sun and poor soil. Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Indian Hawthorn is bothered by soil nematodes and scale.

Pests and Diseases

Leaf spots often infect the foliage causing leaf drop in shady locations.

by Edward F. Gilman