

Ornamental Fruit Trees for the Puget Sound Region J. King, G.A. Moulton, and C.A. Miles



Ornamental fruit trees are an important part of urban and home landscapes, and they are a long-term investment of both time and maintenance. Therefore it is important to keep in mind why we choose an ornamental fruit tree as a landscape element, and also which kinds and cultivars have been proven to be best suited to our local climate conditions. The ideal tree should be attractive not just for a few weeks at bloom time, but contribute positively to the landscape throughout the year. It should also be free of disease, and adapt well to low or

minimal maintenance regimes. Of course, this ideal tree exists only in Utopia! However, we can approach this ideal standard much more closely with careful selection among the options available. Major factors to consider are:

- **Disease resistance** – a primary issue in our cool marine climate where apple scab, powdery mildew, anthracnose, and bacterial canker can attack trees. No trees are immune but the varieties listed in Table 1 have shown good resistance to these problems in testing at the WSU Mount Vernon Northwestern Washington Research and Extension Center from 1984 to 2009.
- **Tree size** – suiting the tree's mature size to the space available is very important. We can select from giants suited to parks and highway planting to little gems that fit in an urban pocket garden. Consider also the option of grafting trees on size-controlling rootstock. Some less vigorous varieties have been grafted high (3-5 feet, like rose standards), suited to entries and patios; this treatment can be very successful with certain varieties of weeping cherry and crabapple.
- **Tree structure** – there is considerable variety in the growth habit of ornamental fruit trees. Most are broad spreading to upright spreading, however, some have a moderate to strongly weeping habit and others are narrowly upright, low spreading, or compact dwarf trees. Trees with unusual structural interest are attractive focal points of a landscape even in winter when the leaves are fallen.
- **Leaf color and appearance** – trees with red, purple, bronze, or copper-tinted leaves can add contrast to the garden if selected and placed well. Also, trees with green leaves of distinctive texture are attractive (example: Golden Raindrops crabapple with finely-cut leaves similar to Japanese maple in appearance). Some ornamental fruit trees have very attractive fall leaf color.
- **Fruit color and persistence** – most ornamental crabapples have small, bright fruit that are mainly edible for birds, and remain on the tree through the autumn and sometimes into the winter. Trees that keep their fruit longer are an asset to the winter landscape. A few crabapples produce larger, edible tart or sweet fruit for culinary, cider, and fresh eating: e.g. Evereste, Dolgo, Centennial, Puget Spice, Chestnut, and Whitney. Most other ornamental fruit trees (e.g. flowering *Prunus* species) have no fruit.

Table 1. Varieties are listed in bloom order, and include those with the best year-round ornamental quality and general resistance to disease, evaluated 1984 to 2009 at WSU Mount Vernon NWREC.

CRABAPPLE

(Early)

Jack (*M. baccata* v. *jackii*)

Bob White

Redbud (*M. zumi* x *calocarpa*)

Louisa

Sugar Tyme

(Midseason)

Lancelot

Tea (*M. hupehensis*)

White Angel

Evereste

Professor Sprenger

Puget Spice

Red Jewel

Prairifire

Marilee

Orange Crush

Candymint Sargent

Holiday Gold

Cinderella

Pink Princess

May's Delight

Firebird

CRABAPPLE

(Late)

Royal Fountain

Prairie Maid

Golden Raindrops

Royal Raindrops

Pumpkin Pie

Adirondack

Lollipop

Silver Moon

(Very Late)

Prairie Rose

FLOWERING CHERRY

Snow Fountain (E)

Yoshino (E)

Akebono (E)

Snow Goose (E)

Shirotae (E)

Amanogawa (M)

Kanzan/Kwanzan (M)

Royal Burgundy (M)

Shirofugen (M-L)

Shogetsu (L)

FLOWERING PLUM

Krauter Vesuvius (E)

Newport (E)

Hollywood (E-M)

ORNAMENTAL PEAR

(Pyrus calleryana)

Jack Pear (E)

Aristocrat (E)

Bradford (E)

OTHER

Flowering Apricot (*Prunus mume*) Bungo (VE)

Flowering Apricot (*Prunus mume*) Mokel (VE)

FLOWER COLOR: Most of the ornamental trees listed above have white or pink flower buds, white flower petals, and green leaves. Exceptions are:

Pink flowers with green leaves: Apricots – Bungo, Mokel; Crabapples – Louisa, Tea, Prairie Maid, Prairie Rose; Flowering cherry – Kwanzan

Pink flowers with red/purple/bronze leaves: Plums – Krauter Vesuvius, Newport, Hollywood; Crabapples – Candymint Sargent, Pink Princess, May's Delight; Flowering cherry – Royal Burgundy

Red flowers with red/purple/bronze leaves: Crabapples – Prairifire, Orange Crush, Royal Fountain, Royal Raindrops



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