

Prunus sargentii: Sargent Cherry¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

Introduction

With attractive bark, good fall foliage color, and delicate pink blooms, Sargent Cherry is highly recommended for the home and urban landscape. Growing at a moderate rate into a 25 to 40-foot-high, upright-spreading to rounded tree, Sargent Cherry makes an ideal shade tree, spreading as wide as it is tall and casting dense shade below. It is often grown with several multiple trunks or upright branches originating from the same position on the trunk ascending



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Prunus sargentii*: Sargent Cherry
Credits: Ed Gilman

in a graceful fashion. This structure could be somewhat of a problem in ice-storms. Training to develop well-spaced branches along the trunk may help reduce this problem. The attractive cinnamon brown bark has a shiny, almost polished appearance with prominent lenticels arranged around the trunk. In late April or early May the one-inch-wide, pink to deep pink single blooms appear before the new red-tinged leaves unfold. The small, pea-sized fruits which follow are red, ripening to a dark purple in June and July. The fruits are considered inconspicuous due to their size and color but are easily found by birds who quickly devour them. The three to five-inch-long, shiny, dark green leaves take on various shades of orange, bronze, and red before dropping in late September, often well before other trees which are still green.

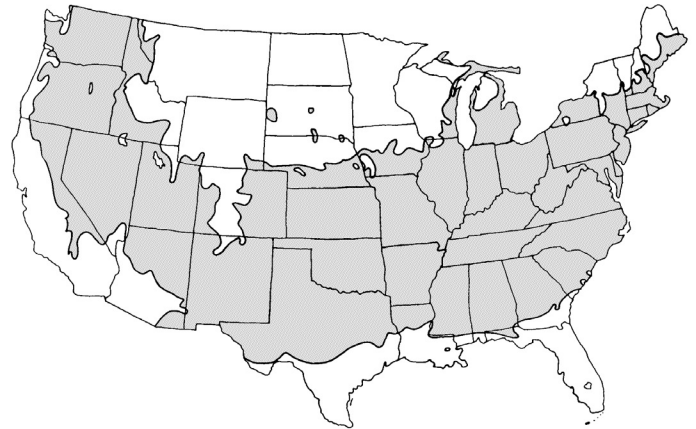


Figure 2. Range

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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General Information

Scientific name: *Prunus sargentii*

Pronunciation: PROO-nus sar-JEN-tee-eye

Common name(s): Sargent Cherry

Family: *Rosaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5A through 8A (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: shade; street without sidewalk; specimen; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

Description

Height: 25 to 40 feet

Spread: 25 to 40 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: vase, round

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval), obovate

Leaf venation: pinnate, brachidodrome

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches, 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: red, copper, orange, yellow

Fall characteristic: showy



Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: pink

Flower characteristics: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: purple, black, red

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: susceptible to breakage

Current year twig color: reddish, brown

Current year twig thickness: medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; slightly alkaline; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: sensitive

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

Sargent Cherry works well as a street tree (probably the best of the cherries for street planting) in areas which can accommodate the spreading canopy. It can be planted along the entry road to a subdivision or commercial landscape on 20-foot-centers or in the tree lawn space between the curb and sidewalk. It is also very effective as a specimen in the lawn or landscape bed.

Sargent Cherry should be grown in full sun on very well-drained, acid soil. Although it grows moderately fast and can reach up to 60 feet tall in the wild, it is relatively short-lived with perhaps a 20-year lifespan, but provides reliable service during this period. Sargent Cherry requires little maintenance once established and is quite tolerant of drought and clay soil.

The cultivar `Columnaris` has a narrow, upright or columnar silhouette 30 to 40 feet tall by 15 feet wide and is very suitable for tight urban spaces, and along streets.

Propagation is by seed, grafting, or budding.

Pests and Diseases

This cherry is bothered by tent caterpillars, aphids, borers, and scales. It is probably less susceptible to disease than most other cherries.