

Crataegus marshallii, Parsley Hawthorn¹

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Family

Rosaceae, rose family.

Genus

Crataegus is Greek for “a kind of thorn.” The word stems from the ancient Greek name *Krataigos*, which the Greek philosopher Theophrastus used to describe a thorny flowering plant. It is a combination of the Greek words *kratus* meaning “strong,” and *akakia* or *akis* meaning “thorn.”

Species

The species name, *marshallii*, is named for Humphrey Marshall, the dendrologist who first described this plant.

Common Name

Parsley Hawthorn, Parsley Haw

The common names of this tree refer to the shape of the leaves, which resemble parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*).

Description

This small native tree grows up to 20 feet tall and can be found in open to partially shaded areas along the moist edges or slopes of floodplains, river banks, and wet woodlands throughout the southeastern United States. Its leaves are simple, alternate, grow from ¾ to 2 inches long,

and appear on slender stalks. The broadly ovate leaves are nearly hairless with 5 to 7 short pointed lobes and serrated (or toothed) edges. The topside of the leaf is shiny and the underside is a pale green, turning red and purple in autumn. The smooth, thin, thorny stems are gray with mottles of brown, which peel off in patches. The small flowers of this tree are approximately 5/8 of an inch wide, with 5 white petals and (usually) 10 red and white stamens. In the spring, flowers grow in clusters on long hairy stalks. By autumn the oblong, bright red haw (similar to a pome) ripens to about 1/3 inch in diameter and persists until the winter.



Figure 1. Spring flowers of *Crataegus marshallii*.
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Figure 2. Fall foliage and ripened fruits of *Crataegus marshallii*.
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Allergen

The double-flowered varieties shed less pollen than single-flowered varieties, but overall, *Crataegus* spp. are moderately allergenic.

Applications

Horticultural

Many species of native hawthorn trees can be found throughout peninsular Florida. Their small size and ability to tolerate poor soil conditions make them a low-maintenance and hardy landscape plant for Florida. Many people find the leaves of this tree aesthetically appealing because they add a delicate touch to the landscape with their fine serrations and lobes.

Commercial/Practical

Crataegus spp. wood is hard and dense. Native Americans and European settlers used the wood of the parsley hawthorn tree for various applications and used its fruit as a food source.

Medicinal

Parsley hawthorn has been used all over the world as an herbal tonic to strengthen the heart. It is currently used as an additive in medicines that reduce high blood pressure.

Wildlife

White tailed deer are attracted to parsley hawthorn because they enjoy browsing on the foliage. Game birds, game animals, songbirds, and rodents use the fruits as a food source, particularly during the winter months, and many song birds use this tree for shelter and nesting.

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