

Recommended Crabapples for Illinois Landscapes

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Crabapples represent the largest taxa of useful flowering trees for Illinois landscapes. A multitude of crabapples are available in the nursery trade and most garden centers, landscape nurseries and chain stores carry a selection of crabapples varieties. It is easy to delineate between good and bad cultivars of crabapples but to distinguish between good and outstanding ones requires many years of observation. Disease resistance is the most important criteria in choosing crabapples for landscape use. Crabapples are susceptible to many diseases with the three most important being apple scab, cedar apple rust and fire blight. The Illinois climate is particularly conducive to the development of apple scab and it is one of the main factors in determining landscape suitability of crabapples. Although fungicides are available that will control apple scab they require repeated applications, which are not practical, nor are they an environmentally sound practice.

The diverse ornamental characteristics of crabapples offer the potential year around or all season interest. Many just think of the flowers when selecting crabapples however, other traits such as fruit, habit, foliage, and bark can also be significant to the appearance of this species and how it might be used in the landscape.

One should not just consider color when evaluating the flowers of crabapples but also the size, time of flowering, if major flower displays or an annual or a biennial event. The bloom period begins in early April and extends to mid-May and the flowers are single, semi-double or double. Flowers of crabapples range in color from white to red with many shades in between. It is also common for some cultivars such as *Malus* 'Bob White', 'Donald Wyman', 'Red Silver', 'Selkirk' and 'Silver Moon' to only flower heavily in alternating years. Double flowers tend to extend the flower display an extra week. However cultivars with double flowers tend to lack fruit display.

Fruit display is a more important characteristic than flowering since the fruit last longer. On the negative side, large fruit can be messy and are often perceived as a nuisance. Crabapple fruit varies from pea size to 2" in diameter. Technically trees with fruit larger than 2" are considered apples. One should select crabapples that have an annual fruit display rather than a biennial display. Crabapples with fruits that persistent into winter or beyond add to the length of time they have an ornamental interest. Additionally fruits attract variety of birds including cedar waxwings, finches and robins. Large fruit size is only important when crabapples are planted for culinary purposes. Good culinary cultivars included 'Dolgo', 'Ralph Shay', and 'Rosseau'.

Crabapples possess a variety of foliage colors. Cultivars that emerge with a bronze or red color that changes to green include: 'Adams', 'Indian Summer', 'Liset', 'Robinson', 'Profusion', 'Red Barron', and 'Silver Dust'. Cultivars noted for their excellent fall color include: 'Adams', 'Amberina', 'Donald Wyman', 'Indian Summer', Lancelot™, 'Red Barron', 'Red Jewel', and 'Silver Drift'.

The habit and size of crabapples is quite diverse. Outstanding shrub types include *M. sargentii*, 'Jewelberry', 'King Arthur', and 'Lancelot'. Crabapple cultivars which have a weeping habit that we rate excellent include: 'Ann E', 'Louisa', 'Red Swan', Weeping Candied Apple, and 'White Cascade'. Excellent upright clones include 'Red Barron' and 'Sentinel'.

Crabapples prefer well drained sunny sites. They are best planted in spring. Plant them in the landscape at the same level that slightly higher than they were growing in the nursery. Higher planting is recommended for clay loam or disturbed soils.

The following is a list of taxa that represent crabapples that perform well in Illinois without protective sprays to prevent disease.

| Recommended Malus Taxa | Flower and fruit | Foliage | Habit | Apple Scab | Cedar Apple Rust | Fire Blight |
|--------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| ‘Adams’ | Deep pink flowers, deep red turning maroon in fall, .5” across | New foliage bronze red the red color remains in the petioles and leaf veins, excellent orange fall color | Broad spreading rounded | Good | Excellent | Excellent to good |
| ‘Adirondack’ | Red buds opening to white flowers, pendulous bright orange-red fruit .5” across | | Upright vase shaped | Excellent | Excellent | Excellent |
| ‘Amberina’ | Crimson in bud, blush pink flowers fading to white, persistent cardinal red fruit .3” across | Dark green foliage with excellent mixed red and golden foliage in the fall | Round to upright spreading | Excellent to good | Excellent | Excellent |
| Ann E™ (‘Manbeck Weeper’) | Pink buds opening to white flowers, persistent bright red fruits .4” across | Cupped, dark green foliage | Weeping | Excellent | Excellent | Excellent |
| <i>Malus baccata</i> ‘Jackii’ | White buds opening to pure white flowers, purplish red fruit .4” across | Good green foliage | Upright Spreading | Excellent | Excellent | Slightly susceptible |
| Christmas Holly™ (‘Chrisozam’) | Pure white flowers, bright red fruit persisting through autumn, .3” across | | Compact rounded | Excellent | Excellent | Excellent |
| ‘Donald Wyman’ | Pink in bud opening to white flowers, bright red fruits up to .5” across | Good dark green foliage that turns golden yellow in the fall | Round to upright spreading | Excellent to good | Excellent | Excellent to good |
| Excalibur™ (‘Excazam’) | White flowers, pale gold fruits persistent through autumn, 2.5” across | Deeply lobed foliage | Dense shrubby type | Excellent | Excellent | Excellent |
| <i>Malus floribunda</i> | Deep pink to red buds opening rosy pink and fading to white, yellow fruit with a slight red blush, .3” across | Bright green foliage | Spreading irregular | Excellent to good | Excellent | Good |
| Hamlet™ (‘Hamzam’) | Deep red buds opening to rosy pink flowers, deep red fruits .4” across | Green foliage with a wine red overlay | Rounded shrubby type | Excellent | Excellent | Excellent |

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|----------------------------|--|---|---|------------|------------------|------------------------|
| Harvest Gold™ ('Hargozam') | Pink buds open to white flowers with a pink blush, light yellow fruit with a red peduncle turning to cider color by Nov., .5" across | Dark green foliage | Upright to round spreading | Good | Excellent | |
| 'Indian Summer' | Red buds opening to a magenta rose colored flowers, fruits are bright red, .6" across | Bronzy-red new foliage turning dark green, golden bronze fall color | Round to upright spreading, open when young | Good | Excellent | Excellent |
| 'Jewelberry' | Pink edged white flowers, more reliable in its flowering than <i>M. sargentii</i> , persistent bright red fruits, .5" across | Dark green cupped foliage | Shrubby | Excellent | Excellent | Excellent |
| King Arthur™ ('Kinarzam') | Pink buds opening to white flowers, persistent bright red fruits .5" across | | Spreading shrubby type | Excellent | Excellent | Excellent |
| Lancelot™ ('Lanzam') | Red buds opening to white flowers, persistent golden yellow fruits .4" across | Good looking green summer foliage, gold fall color | Shrubby type | Good | Excellent | Excellent |
| 'Liset' | Large rose colored flowers, deep red fruits .5" across | New growth red-purple turning to bronze-green | Upright spreading | Good | Excellent | ----- Good |
| 'Louisa' | Red bud opening to pink flowers, golden fruit | Dark green foliage | Weeping | Excellent | Excellent | Excellent |
| 'Orminston Roy' | Rose red buds opening to white flowers, yellow fruits turning to orange – yellow with a red blush, .5" across | Light green foliage | Round to upright spreading | Excellent | Excellent | Moderately susceptible |
| 'Prairie Maid' | White flowers developing into red fruits | | Round to upright spreading | Excellent | Excellent | Excellent |
| 'Prairifire' | Rose colored flowers, oxblood red fruit turning maroon in late fall .4" across | Green foliage with red veins appearing reddish green overall | Round to upright spreading | Excellent | Excellent | Excellent |
| 'Robinson' | Deep pink flowers, deep red fruits .4" across | Reddish purple foliage turning green | Upright and spreading, fast growing | Good | Excellent | ----- Excellent |

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|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Malus sieboldii ‘Professor Sprenger’ | Cardinal red buds opening to white flowers, orange fruit in September changing to red that are .3-.5” across | Green foliage | Round to upright spreading | Excellent Does get frog eye leaf spot | Excellent | Excellent |
| ‘Profusion’ | Rose red flowers fading to rose pink, maroon fruits .5” across | Purplish turning to bronze green | Round to upright spreading | Good but may develop some scab lesions | Excellent | Good |
| ‘Red Barron’ | Large deep red flowers, persistent glossy red fruits, .5” across | New foliage purple fading to bronze green, golden-bronze fall color | Narrowly upright, vase-shaped | Susceptible but tolerant | Good | Good |
| Red Jewel™ (‘Jewelcole’) | Pink buds opening to pure white flowers, red fruits changing to a cider color, .5” across | Glossy medium green foliage, yellow fall color | Round to upright spreading | Excellent | Excellent | Occasional infestation |
| ‘Red Swan’ | Rose colored buds open to white flowers, crimson colored fruit turning to oxblood red, .3” across | | Weeping | Excellent | Excellent | ----- Excellent |
| <i>Malus sargentii</i> | Light pink bud opens to pure white flowers, flowers heavily in alternate years, shiny deep red fruits turning oxblood red in Aug. | Deep green partly lobed | Dense spreading shrub type | Excellent | Good | Good |
| <i>Malus sargentii</i> ‘Tina’ | Light pink bud opens to pure white flowers, flowers heavily in alternate years, shiny deep red fruits turning oxblood red in Aug. | Deep green partly lobed | Dense spreading shrub type smaller than the species | Excellent | Excellent | Excellent |
| ‘Sentinel’ | Cardinal red bud, white flowers with pink margins fading to white, crimson red fruit turning to oxblood by Nov., .3” across | Glossy dark green foliage | Upright | Good | Excellent | Good |
| ‘Silver Drift’ | Red buds opening to white flowers, fruit crimson in Sept. changing to oxblood red by Nov. | Bronze new foliage becoming dark green in summer, bronze-orange fall color | Round to upright spreading | Excellent | Excellent | Excellent |

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|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|-------------------|------------------|-------------|
| 'Silver Moon' | Late flowering pink tinted white flowers, persistent bright red fruits .5" across | Glossy dark green foliage | Narrow upright | Good | Excellent | Excellent |
| 'Sinai Fire' | Large white flowers, bright red fruits .5" across | Bright glossy green foliage | Weeping | Excellent | Excellent | Fair |
| Sugar Tyme™ ('Sutyzam') | Pink in bud with masses of white flowers, rich red fruit .5" across | Green Foliage | Upright oval | Good | Excellent | Fair |
| <i>Malus baccata</i> 'Walters' | Rose red buds open to flowers with a pink blush fading to white, one of the best gold fruited types, fruit .3" across | Dark green, glossy | Round to upright spreading | Excellent | Excellent | Excellent |
| Weeping Candied Apple™ ('Weepcanzam') | | | Weeping | | | |
| 'White Candle' | Semi-double pink and white flowers, few if any fruit | | Upright more than twice as tall as wide | Fair | | ----- |
| 'White Cascade' | White flowers with a pink blush that fades, yellow colored fruit, | | Weeping | Excellent to good | | |
| 'Zumarang' | White flowers opening to wine red fruits | | Pyramidal habit with cherry-like bark | Excellent | Excellent | Excellent |

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