

Spring-flowering Trees

BENEFICIAL LANDSCAPES

Karma Larsen

For now, they're just barren branches. But in just a matter of weeks, they will begin to fill their expanse with as much color and bloom as a good-sized flowerbed. We barely notice them now, but their day is coming.

We look forward to spring, to fresh new growth, to a brown landscape turned suddenly green. And for color. One of the most dramatic and longest-lasting ways to get early color is to plant spring-flowering trees.

Trees have a lot to offer. Shade, winter structure, screening and shelter for us—as well as for the birds we welcome into our yards. We plan our gardens for year-round interest, wanting as interesting a landscape for as much of the year as possible.

Thankfully, spring-flowering trees are rarely one-stop shows. Their blossoms often give way to fruit or colorful foliage later in the year, and many of them also have unusual and attractive bark.

Most spring-flowering trees are good understory trees, thriving in the protection of the canopy provided by larger trees. The pale colors of their blossoms can be especially noticeable in the foreground of large evergreens. And the mulched area under these small trees can be a good place to plant spring bulbs.

The buds of some of early bloomers are visible all winter and look particularly vulnerable to winter's harsh weather. But they're surprisingly tough. Magnolia buds, for instance, are covered with soft hairs, like a tiny fur coat that's soft on the outside and has a tough, protecting layer inside.

So take a good look at your landscape and imagine what it might look like in coming years with these or other spring-bloomers. The trees below have a mature size of less than 30 feet in height and spread. Unless otherwise noted, they have white blossoms sometime between April and June.

Chokecherry, *Prunus virginiana*

Corneliancherry, pagoda or kousa dogwood, *Cornus* species (white to yellow to green)

Crabapple, *Malus* species (white and pink)

Fringetree, *Chionanthus* (**shown above**)

Magnolia (white and pink)

Redbud, *Cercis Canadensis* (purplish pink)

Serviceberry, *Amelanchier*

Shantung maple, *Acer truncatum* (yellow)

Smoketree, *Cotinus obovatus* (yellowish)

Tree lilac, *Syringa reticulata*

(Callery or Bradford pear, once planted for its spring display, is now labelled invasive due to its rapid spread and tendency to form dense thickets that out-compete native and other plants.)



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