

# Hawthorn

## Latin/Botanical name Crataegus



- ❖ Also called Thornapple, May-tree, and Hawberry.
- ❖ The white Hawthorn blossom is the state flower of Missouri.
- ❖ Crataegus species are shrubs or small trees, mostly growing to 15-40 ft. tall, with small pome (apple-like) fruit that are called haws and (usually) thorny branches. The thorns can be 1 to 4 inches long.
- ❖ This very complex genus is most abundant in Eastern North America, but some species are found out west, as well as in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.
- ❖ All have alternate, conspicuously toothed or lobed leaves that turn yellow, orange or red in the fall.
- ❖ The bark is smooth and greenish-brown in young trees and breaks into thin scaly plates with age.
- ❖ Trees can live to be 400 years old.
- ❖ Tender Hawthorne leaves were often used as a non-nicotine substitute for tobacco. Chewing young leaves can also help alleviate hunger pangs. The tree's leaves are also commonly used as garnish at upscale restaurants.
- ❖ The tree is so rich in healing properties that nearly all of its parts have been used in alternative medicine for thousands of years.
- ❖ The fine grain wood was used for tool handles and is a top choice for sculptors when designing intricate pieces. The roots of the tree are also harvested and used to make jewelry boxes, fashion accessories and combs.
- ❖ Hawthorns provide food and shelter for many species of birds and mammals, and the showy white or pink flowers are important for many nectar-feeding insects.
- ❖ If you decide to grow a Hawthorn tree, perhaps look for a disease resistant variety such as Winter King or Washington or the Thornless Cockspur Hawthorne.
- ❖ Hawthorn trees like full sun (6 hours) to partial shade and well-drained soil. They tolerate drought, pollution, cold, and make good street trees.
- ❖ There's one by Palmer's Variety at 221 Elm St and CET at 112 Elm St here in Pittsfield.
- ❖ Hawthorn hedging was planted across England in the Parliamentary Enclosure period, between 1750 and 1850.
- ❖ The Pilgrims reportedly named The Mayflower after the Hawthorn tree whose nickname is "Mayflower".
- ❖ In Britain, the tree is associated with fairies, especially when planted with Oak and Ash trees.
- ❖ In the 1700s, Hawthorn flowers were used as garlands and set outside English homes during May Day celebrations.
- ❖ It is said that American legend Paul Bunyan used the Washington Hawthorns branches as a back scratcher.
- ❖ Many species of Hawthorn make excellent bonsai trees.

*This Tree of the Month series is brought to you by the City of Pittsfield, RSVP and Pittsfield Tree Watch, a volunteer group that promotes tree stewardship and education in our City.*

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