

10 Crabapples to Know, Show, and Grow

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When asked to give recommendations for which crabapples to use in a given landscape situation, the authors' responses are typically: "Let's start with 10 and go from there!"

The 10 crabapples discussed here were selected after holding vigorous discussions and arguing their merits in the Crablandia II plot at Secrest Arboretum, in Wooster, Ohio, at The Ohio State University's Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. These discussions were usually terminated either by a lack of light left in the sky or by the lack of ammunition necessary to finish an excellent crabapple fight.

All of these taxa can be viewed any time of the year at the Crablandia II plot. We encourage all to do so to better evaluate which one or ones will best fit into any given landscape setting.

These crabapples are part of an ongoing research study evaluating disease susceptibility and overall aesthetic profiles of these trees. The plot was initiated in 1998 with 63 taxa. Currently, there are 68 taxa planted and being evaluated.

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The plot design is completely randomized with five single plant replications of each taxon, and the plot is evaluated monthly. The plot will continue to increase in number of taxa with new releases or selections until 80 taxa are planted, thereby filling the allotted space.

The crabapples listed here are in alphabetical order and are not placed in any order of preference or performance. All of these crabapples are impressive in bloom and in fruit or in form, have good to outstanding resistance to apple scab disease, and are worthy landscape assets. We hope that you enjoy watching these trees grow and show their "colors" as much as we do — and keep in mind — the 10 profiled here are just the beginning.

Note: Crabapples are *Malus* taxa with fruits less than two inches in diameter at maturity. Most ornamental crabapples are within the 1/2- to 3/4-inch-diameter range.



'Adirondack'

Positives: Oblong, orange-red fruits are impressive from late August through mid-December. Showy white flowers with a pleasing narrow or tight, V-shaped upright tree form; great autumn fruit/ foliage combination; fruit ripens to a deep orange-red; fruit appears singular rather than clustered; flowers are abundant and red-tinged.

Negatives: Somewhat slow to establish, and leafhoppers appear to relish the foliage but do little damage.

Diseases: No scab; trace of fireblight. There are not many upright crabapples without serious flaws, but 'Adirondack' not only is without such serious flaws, but also is a truly outstanding ornamental crabapple.



Malus baccata 'Jackii'

Positives: Maroon-red fruits color up by late July and are highly effective ornamentally until mid-December. Lightly scented white flowers accent the large, fast growing, broadly rounded tree form. Very reliable yearly flower display; large, glossy green leaves are by far the best foliage of any crabapple in the plot; fall contrast of yellow- and rust-colored leaves against attractive maroon-red fruit is outstanding; bark develops an attractive orange cast with age.

Negatives: Relative sparseness of fruit clusters and mediocre overall winter appearance.

Diseases: No scab.



'Excalibur'*

Positives: Tiny, golden-yellow, shiny fruits are outstanding from mid-September to mid-December. Petite, white flowers line branches on this 8-foot dwarf, globe-type tree form. Fruit-lined branches create striking specimen in the landscape, with fruits maturing to an aesthetically pleasing shiny, cider-brown color.

Negatives: Flowers can be hidden by rapidly expanding foliage; fruit is hidden on the plant interior until leaves drop.

Diseases: No scab; apple mosaic virus noted.

* If unavailable, try another fabulous yellow-gold fruited alternative crabapple called 'Bob White.'



'Holiday Gold'

Positives: Clusters of golden-yellow fruits line the branches, effective from late September to late March. Impressive clusters of white blooms are consistent, excellent performers each year on a somewhat rounded, open tree form. One of the best new, yellow-fruited crabapples; fruits an attractive cream-yellow mellowing to deep gold-yellow; nice rose blush can develop on exposed fruit.

Negatives: Tree form can become awkward due to repeated fruit loads.

Diseases: No scab; trace of fireblight.



'Firebird'**

Positives: Very small, red-orange fruits are dispersed along the branches from late September to early January. Tiny, white flowers accent the upright vase tree form. Due to top-grafting, the unique shape is consistent and perfect for size-restricted spaces.

Negatives: Slow to establish and grow; flower and fruit displays are scattered and steady but never dazzling.

Diseases: No scab.

** If unavailable, try another excellent high grafted tiny, red-fruited alternative unique crabapple called 'Lollipop.'



'Louisa'

Positives: Scattered lemon-gold fruits are noticeable late July to mid-November. Outstanding pink flowers enhance a true weeping tree form. Tree form is a glorious asset with arching, graceful branches

upswept at tips; fruit darkens to a gold-orange with a tan-brown blush.

Negatives: Fruit set is light and scattered, never profuse.

Diseases: No scab. Though there are a number of outstanding spreading-weeping crabapples, such as 'Manbeck's Weeper,' 'Molten Lava,' 'Mary Potter,' and 'Candymint,' 'Louisa' is a rare true weeping crabapple.



'Prairifire'

Positives: Purple-red fruits are easily the first to be noticed in late June and are ornamental until early December. Striking coral-red flowers seem to fill the rounded, open tree form. Yearly spectacular bloom contrasts emerging red-tinged green foliage; firm purplish fruits slowly age to cherry red; fall color of orangish spur leaves contrasts well with fruits and other foliage; attractive lenticel-speckled bark.

Negatives: Mediocre winter and early summer appearance.

Diseases: Trace of scab for past three years, yet completely scab-free other years.



'Red Jewel'

Positives: Sparkling cherry-red fruits light up in early September and remain impressive into mid-April. Snow-white flowers outline the upright open tree form. Phenomenal firm fruits are very appealing well into spring; attractive blooms.

Negatives: Mediocre tree form noticeable in late winter to early spring; slow-growing tree; tree form a bit awkward.

Diseases: Trace of scab just in 2000; some fireblight problems.



'Strawberry Parfait'

Positives: Red-cream fruits color up and create an impact from starting in mid-August with colors darkening through the fall and winter to mid-April. Rounded pink-red flowers appear to entirely encompass each branch on this uniquely shaped, open, spreading tree form. Fruits age to deep red; newly emerged foliage is a burgundy becoming green with burgundy-tinge; good fall color; fruits remain firm through late winter.

Negatives: Fruit mummies can be tenacious; unusual, erratic, upright-spreading growth habit is not for every landscape.

Diseases: Trace of scab.



'Sugar Tyme'

Positives: Brilliant red fruits provide color in early September and remain until mid-April. Stunning sugar-white floral display from pale pink buds on a mounded spreading tree form. Showy, persistent, firm fruits create interest through late winter; good overall form; dense foliage.

Negatives: Mediocre appearance during summer before fruits color; foliage appears chlorotic or off-color during mid- to late summer; yellow-brown frost rings develop on fruits in some years.

Diseases: Trace of scab.



So, that's it — 10 magical *Malus* you should know. We added a few alternatives in the text above, and we can think of many more, such as a number of variants of the Sargent crabapple, and then....Well, wait 'til next year.