

History

- Noted by Spaniards and differentiated from cousins in Europe and Asia in 1571
- First cultivated in 1811
- George Washington spoke of the Redbud's beauty in his diary; he often transplanted seeds from the forest into his garden

Interesting Facts

- State Tree of Oklahoma
- Nicknamed "Judas Tree" along with cousin *Cercis siliquastrum* - it is said that Judas hanged himself on such a tree, and that afterward the flowers "blushed in shame"
- Native Americans ate flowers raw and boiled and roasted the seeds for food; they used different parts of the tree for medicinal purposes
- In some parts of Southern Appalachia, the green twigs are used as seasoning for wild game; for this reason it is sometimes called the spicewood tree
- Nutrients: flower extract contains anthocyanins; seeds contain proanthocyanides and lindenic, alpha-lendenic, oleic, & pamitic acids

Test Your Knowledge

To which of the following families does the Eastern Redbud belong?

- A. the legume family
- B. the rose family
- C. the tea family
- D. the olive family

Resources

<http://www.arborday.org/treeguide/TreeDetail.cfm?id=6>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_redbud
http://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs_ceca4.pdf
<http://www.plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=CECA4>
<http://www.duke.edu/~cwcook/trees/ceca.html>
<http://againstallheresies.blogspot.com/2007/04/judas-tree-and-legend.html>



Photo retrieved from USDA Plant Fact Sheet

Cercis canadensis

Fabaceae Family



Photo retrieved from arborday.org

Eastern Redbud

Tree Characteristics

Shape/Size

Rounded shape; crown spreads approximately 25 feet; 20-30 feet tall

Bark



Dark color; smooth, later scaly with some ridges; may contain maroon patches

Photo retrieved from www.duke.edu/~cwcook/trees/ceca.html

Twigs

Slender and zigzag; nearly black; spotted with light Lenticels

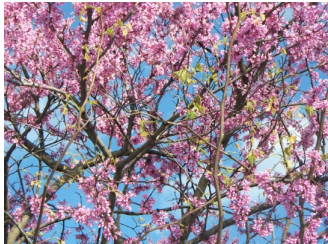


Photo taken in Sidney, OH

Buds

Tiny, rounded, and dark red to chestnut in color

Leaves

Alternate, simple, heart-shaped, entire margins; 3-5 inches in length; thin and papery; may be slightly hairy below; emerge after flowers bloom; leaves turn to a dark green during summer then yellow in autumn; prominent veins

Flowers

Bloom March to May (peak in April); pink to red in color; 1/2 inch in length; grow in clusters on older twigs and trunk



Photo taken in Sidney, OH

Fruit

Flattened pod elliptical in shape; dark brown when ripe; 2-4 inches long; mature August-October; seeds are 1/4 inch long; approximately 4-10 seeds per pod; seeds dispersed by wind and animals; however, most trees are sterile

Interactions with Wild

- Seeds provide food for birds (especially Northern Bobwhite and some song birds) in the winter
- Leaves eaten by the caterpillars of some species from the Lepidoptera order
- Provides materials for nests and nesting sites and shelter for birds and mammals
- The Henry's elfin butterfly and hummingbirds use for nectar; bees use for pollen
- Considered less desirable or emergency food for those animals who do graze on the tree

Growing Conditions

Can be grown in full sun to shade; various soils; used as a landscape ornament; often found as understory tree in the wild; grows in lower great plains, eastern US, and Ontario, Canada

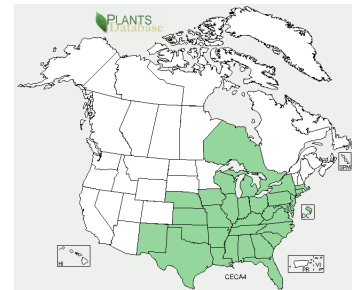


Photo retrieved from USDA Plant Fact Sheet

Pests and Disease

- Three main diseases: leaf anthracnose, Botryosphaeria canker, and verticillium wilt
- Tree is attacked by several different species of wood borers
- Redbud leaffolder, grape leaffolder, and Japanese weevil all feed on the leaves