

Small trees with big impact

Beautiful things come in small packages. It's true for diamonds and it's true for trees, too. There are many small trees that are stunning in home landscapes! Many are especially beautiful this time of year.

The most popular small tree in North Dakota is the crabapple. These trees have bright blossoms in spring and colorful fruits that attract wildlife during winter. When selecting a crabapple, focus on varieties that are hardy and resist disease. Apple scab disease, in particular, may cause defoliation in summer.

Then focus on color and landscaping features such as form.

Besides the color of *flowers*, which stay on the tree for a few weeks, also consider the color and persistence of *fruits*, which may brighten the winter landscape for months.

Recommended pink-flowered varieties include 'Adams', 'Indian Magic', 'Indian Summer', 'Prairifire', and 'Red Splendor'. These all have bright red fruits that persist into the winter.

If you prefer white flowers, 'Red Jewel', 'Donald Wyman', 'Sugar Tyme', and 'Cardinal' have brilliant red fruits while 'White Cascade', 'Professor Sprenger', 'Canary', and 'Bob White' have interesting orange-gold fruits.

'Gladiator' and 'Prairifire' are noted for their purple foliage.

'Red Jade' and 'Molten Lava' (white flowers/red fruits) have a distinctive weeping habit. 'Louisa' has won awards for being an outstanding specimen plant—this weeper has pink flowers and golden fruits.

Some people hate the mess that crabapple fruits create. If this is the case, the sterile variety 'Spring Snow' is preferred. But the best crabapple varieties will not drop loads of messy fruit. Fruits of superior varieties are small, persist through the winter, and serve as an important source of food to birds in early spring (see photo next page).

Other small trees can make a bold statement in the landscape.

'Ivory Silk' Japanese tree lilac may be the toughest small tree. It's tolerant to drought, salt, and poor soil. This lilac has creamy white flowers in June, blooming just after other spring-flowering trees (see photo). This is appreciated since it extends the bloom time of flowering trees in the landscape. Its cherry-like bark glistens in the sun.

Do not underestimate the importance of bark when landscaping since our trees are leafless for as many months of the year as when they are leaved. The bark can add lots of interest to the landscape in winter.

Ornamental pears are worth a look. Many varieties display a profusion of pure white flowers in spring, glossy green foliage in summer, and dramatic red foliage in fall. The hardiest and most popular Callery pear in the



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Midwest is 'Autumn Blaze' (Zone 4/5). In colder regions, go with 'Prairie Gem', an Ussurian pear selection from North Dakota State University. These varieties will not bear messy fruit.


Serviceberry (a.k.a. Juneberry) is one of my favorite trees. It has white blooms in spring, purple fruits in summer (birds quickly gobble them up), vivid orange foliage in fall, and a showy silvery bark in winter. Serviceberry tolerates partial shade.

Pagoda dogwood also tolerates shade. Its horizontal branching habit makes it a beautiful specimen plant. Hardy to Zone 4, it has attractive maroon fall color.

Amur maple has a spreading habit and is noted for its brilliant red fall color. It's very drought tolerant, although it will struggle in alkaline soils.

Hawthorns are underrated plants. The Canadian variety 'Snowbird' bears fragrant, double white flowers that turn to pink. Its glossy foliage, red fruit, and twisted trunk are added features.

Last but not least, mountain ash is beloved for its bright orange fruits in fall. Keep in mind that a mountain ash is not a true ash. It will not be susceptible to the emerald ash borer that is threatening ash trees in nearby

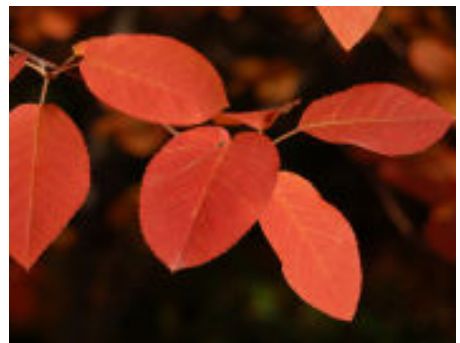
states. Mountain ash prefers a cool, moist, shaded soil—an east-facing location is ideal. 

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- A Coming" by Jim Baker, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jim-ar/2368055935/>; Bailey Nurseries ('Donald Wyman' crabapple, Ussurian pear, and Japanese tree lilac); "pagoda dogwood2" by Brian, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/myprontopup/640692399/>; "Juneberry blossoms" by skw, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/frfx1086/503778309/>; "Serviceberries" by RichardBH, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/rbh/5920056696/>; "Serviceberry/leaves in fall" by Tony Frates, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/tonyfrates/6289935729/>.



From top left and clockwise: The fruits of 'Donald Wyman' crabapple may persist all winter until the following spring bloom; white blossoms of Ussurian pear; horizontal branching and immature fruits of pagoda dogwood; 'Ivory Silk' Japanese tree lilac in bloom.



Serviceberry in spring, summer, and fall.