

## Trees That Brighten the View

© 2006 By Todd Williamson

Eastern Redbud. *Cercis canadensis*.

Every spring the season is announced loud and clear with Forsythia, Daffodils and Tulips, followed by Redbud. Blooming in masses of lavender flowers in April along the branches and young stems for 2-3 weeks, Redbud heralds the spring season in all its glory. A native tree, Redbud comes from the nursery in a clump or single-stem form and has large-ish heart shaped leaves. It is a small to medium-sized ornamental tree, often maturing at 15' tall by 15' wide, but can become twice as large under optimum conditions. It has an upright vase growth habit in youth (if grown in an open area), becoming spreading rounded to irregularly-shaped (and often leaning) with age; however, it is often found with an irregular shape at the edges of forests and woodlands, where it stretches towards the limited sunlight. Its growth is rapid in youth, but slows after ten years



Redbud prefers and needs a moist, rich, well-drained soil in partial sun to partial shade for long-term optimum performance, but is somewhat adaptable to many types of soils, soil pHs, dry soils, and other moderately stressful situations (except wet sites, which make it more prone to Verticillium wilt). Redbud trees are often used as specimen trees, in group plantings, or in naturalized areas. It has heart-shaped leaves that occur on the new growth of zigzag stems.

Redbud is used as a foundation, specimen, entranceway, group planting, woodland edge, naturalization, or Spring accent tree and also as the first (or second) of a series of flowering ornamental trees in combination with Serviceberry (*Amelanchier*), Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*), Carolina Silverbell (*Halesia carolina*), Crabapple (*Malus*), Chinese Dogwood (*Cornus kousa*), and Japanese Tree Lilac (*Syringa reticulata*) for a floral sequence of ornamental trees with white, cream, or lavender/pink/red flowers in Spring and early Summer.



Redbud is part of the pea (Fabaceae) which relates it to legumes. It produces pea-pod like fruit containing viable seed at the end of the season. Legumes are plants that create nitrogen food in the soil, to the benefit of many other plants.