

Redbud Trees – Harbingers of Spring

Nothing quite heralds the coming of spring than the spectacular beauty of redbud trees in bloom. Miniature clusters of flowers transform the trees into vibrant displays of color with the blossoms persisting for 2-3 weeks. Depending on the variety, the flower colors range from a delicate pink to magenta. Blossoms give way to heart-shaped green to bronze leaves. Seed pods appear in the summer and may persist into winter. Autumn colors are equally stunning with the foliage turning to a deep gold/yellow/red. Redbuds are deciduous but with landscape interest three seasons of the year, they are excellent assets to your landscape.



Photo Courtesy of Becca Dickstein, Ph.D., UNT, NPSOT – Trinity Forks

Denton is one of the top locations to see these wonderful trees! The Redbud Festival in Denton, Texas is the city's official Arbor Day event. The Redbud Festival traces its roots back to an annual Texas Woman's University Festival that was held from the 1930s until 1981 to celebrate the school's beautification and tree planting efforts. In 1994, Keep Denton Beautiful gave the festival new life in honor of Denton's designation as the "Redbud Capital of Texas."

Redbuds are excellent understory trees and are recommended alternatives to canopy trees where powerlines are present. Redbuds are good pollinator plants to long-tongued bees such as blueberry bees and carpenter bees. The leaves also serve as host plants for several species of butterflies and moths.

Three types of redbuds can be grown in our region. There are differences in size, water requirements, and heat tolerance so consider those needs when selecting the best redbud for your location.

Eastern Redbud (*Cercis Canadensis var. canadensis*): Grows best in a moist, well-drained location. The Eastern Redbud grows throughout most of the eastern U.S., extending as far west as Oklahoma and Texas and north into Canada. Its mature size is typically 20-30 feet high and 25-35 feet across. It needs full sun to light shade exposure. It tolerates acidic or alkaline soils as well as heavy clays. When planted in full sun, water the tree regularly during dry periods. Hardiness Zones are 4-9.

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Texas Redbud (*Cercis canadensis* var. *texensis*): Grows on thin, calcareous well-drained soils that are west of the Eastern Redbud's native habitat. The Texas variety is smaller and more drought tolerant than the Eastern variety. It grows naturally from southern Oklahoma to central Texas and northeastern Mexico. The leaves are thick, leathery, and smaller with wavy margins. The waxy upper surface of the leaves helps retard transpiration. Its mature size is typically 15-20 feet high and 15-20 feet across. It needs full sun to partial sun exposure. Its soil requirements are adaptable with medium water requirements. Hardiness Zone is 6.

Photo Courtesy of Sally and Andy Wasowski, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center



Mexican Redbud (*Cercis canadensis* var. *mexicana*): The Mexican Redbud is native to west Texas. It is smaller than the Texas Redbud with smaller, glossier, and more wavy-edged leaves. It is more drought tolerant than Texas variety and has a higher heat tolerance. The Mexican Redbud can be used as a large shrub or small tree. Its mature size is typically 10-15 feet high and 10-15 feet across. It needs full sun to part sun exposure. Its soil requirements are adaptable with medium-low water requirements. Hardiness Zone is 7.

Photo Courtesy of Stephanie Brundage, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

About the Native Plant Society of Texas: Our mission is to promote research, conservation and utilization of native plants and plant habitats of Texas through education, outreach and example. We want all Texans to value native plants, native habitats and healthy ecosystems as essential to the well-being of living things and to our quality of life. Our vision is a future where native habitats are managed as critically beneficial natural assets, and where residential and commercial developments employ sustainable designs that preserve and promote native habitats. We invite you to join us in this mission. Visit www.npsot.org for more information.



The Native Plant Society of Texas - Trinity Forks Chapter is pleased support the NICE Native Plant Partners Program and work in coordination with multiple nurseries in the Denton area. Look for the NICE sign on your next visit to a participating North Texas nursery.

