

# SUNNYSIDE THYMES

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## SMG's Grow Native!

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**Serviceberry** (*Amelanchier* spp.) A native alternative for the invasive *Callery Pear*.

The serviceberry is an attractive small deciduous tree/shrub with spring blossoms which can provide year-round interest in the landscape as well



Typical serviceberry flower. Photo: Lee Eastland

as producing edible fruits. The serviceberry also has several cultivars as it grows in several areas of North America. There are approximately thirty species of this genus, with all except for two being native to North America. The genus is in the pome-fruit sub-family of the rose family (related

to apples), with all having small oval or elliptical leaves, with finely toothed margins and downy undersides. Most *Amelanchier* species have short lived flowers produced in terminal clusters that may be upright or drooping. Each flower has five petals surrounding the stamens. The petals typically are white, but can be pink, yellow, or other color shades depending on the cultivar.

The flowers typically only last a week. The small berries look and taste like blueberries when ripe and are ready for harvest 2 to 3 months after bloom.

The fruit is popular food for several species of birds, small animals, and humans.

The fruits were used by Native Americans and the early settlers and even today some people cultivate as fruit trees and use the fruit in jel-



Fall foliage. Photo: Univ. of Minnesota

lies, cobblers, pies, muffins, coffee cakes, and dessert toppings. The shrubs/trees typically produce fruit 2 to 3 years after planting.



Serviceberry tree/shrub.

Photo: Univ. Minnesota

The serviceberry can be left as a multi-stemmed shrub or pruned as a tree with one or more stems. These shrubs/trees can provide ornamental interest to one's landscape year around. They can be planted at the edge of woodlands, borders, screens, as an unsharped hedge, as an individual specimen, or in small groupings. The species that are native to wet areas will do well near wet areas. Most species prefer rich, moist, but well-drained soils with full sun to part shade. They are susceptible to some of the same pests and diseases as apples and pears, including fire blight and cedar rust. They also can send up suckers which can be very annoying, and the deer tend to like to eat the new growth.

There are several species of serviceberry that are used as landscape plants and are often difficult to tell apart since they look similar and they hybridize very easily. The most common are the following:

- Downy or Common serviceberry (*A. arborea*) is **native to Indiana** and also referred to as shadbush, native to the USA regions of northeastern, southeastern, and across the Midwest to Iowa. The slow growing small tree can eventually reach 20 to 25 feet tall. This species prefers moist, well drained, acidic soil in full sun to partial shade and is hardy to Zone 4.
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- Smooth or Alleghany serviceberry (*A. laevis*) is **native to Indiana** and a multi-stemmed/suckering shrub/tree native to eastern North America that grows 25 feet tall and up to 10 feet wide and can be pruned to form a small tree. It does best in full sun sites that are moist and hardy to zones 4. Most common cultivars include: Snowcloud, Cumulus, and Prince.
  - Saskatoon or dwarf shadbush (*A. ainifolia*), is a multi-stemmed shrub/tree native to western North America. It grows about 10 foot tall and can spread by rhizomes which can become a problem if planted in the wrong location. It is a heavy producer of fruit, and therefore a good choice for attracting wildlife and is considered generally hardy in zones 3-9 with some cultivars hardy to Zone 1. Most common cultivars: Altaglow, Regent, Honeywood, Northline, Pembina, and Smokey.
  - Eastern, Canadian, or Shadbush serviceberry (*A. Canadensis*) is a shrub/tree that suckers and grows up to 20 feet tall. It is native to eastern North America occurring in wet sites, bogs, and swamps. This specie is hardy to zone 3. Most common cultivars: Micropetala, Rainbow Pillar, Spring Glory, and Tradition.
  - Apple Serviceberry (*A.xgrandiflora*) is a hybrid of *A. arborea* and *A. leervis* with upright branching, with large (some plants have pink) flowers, and can grow up to 20 feet tall and considered hardy to Zones 4. Most common cultivars include: Autumn Brilliance, Ballerina, Robin Hill, and Rubescens.

*References: "Serviceberry, Amalanchier spp." Susan Mahr, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison; "Serviceberry" Univ. of Minnesota Extension; "Serviceberry or Juneberry"; Herbarium Cofrin Center of Biodiversity- Univ. of Wisconsin*

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