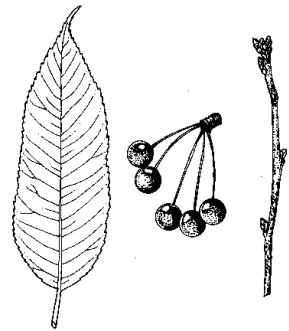


Maine Tree Species Fact Sheet

Common Name: Pin Cherry (Fire Cherry, Wild Red Cherry, and Bird Cherry)

Botanical Name: *Prunus pensylvanica*



Tree Type: Deciduous

Physical Description:

Growth Habit: Pin cherry is a small, rapidly growing common tree. It is sometimes called fire cherry for its value as a reforestation agent after forest fires. The bitter, aromatic, alternate leaves are 3-4 inches long and 1 inch wide. They are narrowly lanceolate, sharp-pointed and have a finely serrate margin with incurved teeth and are lustrous dark green in color. The bark is thin, smooth, reddish-brown in color, and breaks into papery layers. It is marked by large, irregular horizontal bands of orange lenticels. The twigs are slender, smooth, shiny and bright red in color. They have a bitter almond taste and a peculiar odor.

Height: Pin cherry reaches a height of 25-30 feet and has a trunk diameter of 6-10 inches. This species is hardy to Zone 2.

Shape: The pin cherry is considered a shrub or a medium-sized tree. It has slender, ascending branches, which form a narrow, rounded crown.

Fruit/Seed Description/Dispersal Methods:

Pin cherry flowers from late March to early June. The perfect flowers are white with long pedicels. They are borne in corymbs or umbels and expand with the leaves. The round, juicy, one-seeded, light red fruits are 1/4" in diameter and are arrayed on long stems, with 3-5 in a cluster. Fruits are dispersed by gravity and to a much lesser degree by birds and small mammals after they ripen in July. It has been estimated that some seeds buried in the soil retain their viability for 50 to 150 years.

Range within Maine:

Pin cherry is common throughout the state, but has little value except as protection and cover for soil on recent clearing or burned areas.

Distinguishing Features:

Pin cherry has smooth, reddish brown bark, with long horizontal pores. The branches are at almost right angles to the trunk and the fruit appears in long-stemmed clusters.

Interesting Features:

The wood of the pin cherry is coarse-grained, soft and light. In general, it is not used for lumber and considered a noncommercial species. The gum produced by the tree is edible.

In the nursery trade, pin cherry has been used as a grafting and budding stock for sour cherry.

Relationship to Wildlife:

Birds and mammals eat the fruit of this species. Birds, especially ruffed grouse, eat the buds and foliage. The twigs are browsed by deer. Beavers cut pin cherry and may completely remove small stands.

Landscape Use:

Pin cherry is not commonly used in the home landscape.

Common Problems or Pests of the Tree in Maine:

Many diseases attack this species including black knot, cherry leaf spot, powdery mildew, rust, and leaf curler. Insects that attack the tree include the uglynest caterpillar, eastern tent caterpillar, cherry leaf beetle, fall canker worm and a web-spinning sawfly.

References:

Forest Trees of Maine, Twelfth Edition. Maine Forest Service/Department of Conservation. 1995.

Know Your Trees. Cope, J.A. and Fred E. Winch, Jr. Cornell Cooperative Extension. 1992.

Manual of Woody Landscape Plants, 5th Edition. Dirr, Michael A. Publishing L.L.C. 1998.

United States Dept. of Agriculture: Silvics of North America
http://www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/silvics_manual/volume_2/prunus/pensylvanica.htm

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources: Pin Cherry <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us>

