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Amelanchier for Southern Wisconsin Gardens

Amelanchier is derived from their French Provençal name, amalenquièr or amelanchièr. They belong to the Rosacea Family which began to evolve in the Eocene Epoch some 50 million years ago. The Rosacea also contains Apples, Roses, Peaches, Pears, Strawberry, Plum, Raspberry, etc. There are about 17 species in North America, 2 species in Asia and 1 in Europe (see note below). The numerous common names include: shadbush, shadwood, shadblow, serviceberry, sarvisberry, juneberry, saskatoon, sugarplum, wild-plum, and chuckley pear.

Foliage and form: Typically, their foliage is smooth, alternate, with serrated edges. The bases of the leaves are usually cordate - heart-lobed. Autumn colors are seasonally variable but range from simple yellow to glorious shades of deep-red, orange, rust, apricot, etc. They range from spreading colonizing shrubs to 65' trees. Some of the larger growing types may be pruned into very attractive smaller trees - but they may sucker at their bases. Their bark is gray and often smooth, aging to ridged and scaly. All *Amelanchier* are very tolerant of pruning. Its wood is hard and tough, making it ideal for tool handles. Curiously, heating the wood makes it even harder and may be molded when it's hot.



Soil: Moist soils but quite adaptable within the various species. They may suffer from chlorosis when grown on very alkaline soils. All species dislike heavily compacted soils.

Habitat: Full sun to deciduous shade. Commonly found growing along forest edges.

Mulching: 2-3" of mulch either in very early spring or late autumn.



Flowers: Born in pendulous to vertical racemes of white to pale pink. The flower buds can be blushed with a bit more red. Their flowers are perfect, with male and female parts in one flower. They bloom in April or Early May in our area - one of our very first native blooming woody ornamentals. Some species are nicely fragrant while others are a bit malodorous. Numerous bees, butterflies and other insects are attracted to the flowers and to the entire plant. The flower budding stems may be cut for forced arrangements. After cutting from the plant, recut about 1" off the bottom of the stems while they are under water. This will make the cut stems last longer. All *Amelanchier* flowers are very valuable for wildlife.

Fruits: The berry-like mostly round pomes are wonderfully delicious, especially in the *A. arborea* & *A. alnifolia* groups, for us as well as for numerous birds, mammals, etc. If you are able to beat the wildlife to eating them, they are excellent fresh, in smoothies, with ice cream & yogurt, jams, jellies, pastries, pies, etc.

Some noted cultivars are selected for superior fruits. One of our first native fruits to ripen.

Their fruits are also highly nutritious. Apomictic fruits/seeds are produced in a number of species -- development of seeds or embryos without fertilization, resulting in identical offspring.



Winter: no special treatment is required. However, rabbits, mice, deer and other herbivores often damage them, so I recommend protecting them for the first 2-3 years. Mulching for the first few years at a depth of 2-3" is recommended but optional thereafter.

Fertilization: They enjoy a comprehensive time release fertilizer.

Planting: anytime from when the ground is thawed in the spring to 4 weeks before GROUND freeze in the autumn.

Propagation: Seed in the species, but requires cold stratification in most species. Most cultivars are raised by cuttings or by grafting, even onto roots of *Crataegus* - Hawthorn and *Sorbus* - Mountain Ash.

Pest and diseases: Rabbits (one of their favorites), deer, rodents, etc. dine on *Amelanchier*, after all, what do you expect? -- they are native to their environments. Diseases are numerous but they are very tolerant if kept in healthy growth. They dislike newly disturbed soils which often stresses them to death. I recommend at least 5 years before planting in new construction sites and then plant with Mycorrhizal fungi. Most *Amelanchier* are sensitive to medium to high air pollutions, especially sulfur dioxide and ozone.

Hardiness: All of the listed species and cultivars are hardy to at least zone 4.

Amelanchier is quite an enigmatic genus, with the individual species not being very well defined. Many have undergone numerous scientific name changes in the past 50 to 100 years.



***Amelanchier alnifolia* – Alder Leaved Serviceberry, Saskatoon Serviceberry** is native to our Great Plains from southern Canada to Nebraska and westward. Maturing in the 8-10'+ height with our national champion is around 41' high and wide but are mostly multi-stemmed spreading shrubs. Erect racemes of white fragrant flowers are about 3/4" diameter. Juicy edible bluish-purple fruits are excellent however they are enjoyed. Autumn colors are highly variable but rarely fail to please with reds, oranges, yellows, etc. Japanese Beetles may be a problem on some of the following cultivars.

'Honeywood' like the species but with extra tasty fruits with few seeds. Later flowering and vigorous.

'Martin' bears copious delicious large berries and matures in the 12-16' tall range,

'**Northline**' bears abundant sweet bluish berries. 5-8' tall range.

'**Pembina**' matures in the 9-12' range with large tasty sweet fruits.

'**Regent**' is more compact maturing in the 6' range and much less spreading-suckering than other cultivars. It has excellent foliage and extra tasty sweet seedless fruits.

'**Smokey**' matures in the 8-12'. It's very productive with fleshy, medium-sized sweet fruits. We don't carry this as it is very susceptible to rust and rapidly suckers, producing large colonies.

'**Theissen**' like the species but taller growing in the 15' range, with larger more abundant, tastier fruits that don't all ripen at once.

'**Standing Ovation**' aka '**Obelisk**' is an upright columnar form maturing in the 15' range and about 4' wide. Soft green summer foliage turns oranges and red in the autumn. Its fragrant flowers and tasty fruits are a bit small than the species. A bit more prone to foliar diseases.

Other cultivars, extolled for their fruit attributes, that may be found include: '**Altaglow**', '**Success**', '**Parkwood**' and

Amelanchier arborea – **Downy Serviceberry, Juneberry, Shadbush, Shadblow, Service tree or Sarvis-tree** is native to much of the eastern United States, Southeastern Canada and from Minnesota to Texas. Growing to 40+ ft. in ideal locations, it is commonly in the 15-25' tall range in the residential landscape. The growth pattern is more upright with horizontal lateral branches -- very picturesque especially with a light snow fall tracing the twigs. Its foliage emerges grayish green due to tomentose (fuzzy) hairs and matures to a splendid array of bright autumn colors of red, oranges, yellows, etc. In our area, they are often the first to color-up in the autumn and to also drop their leaves. The slightly pungent fragrant pendulous racemes of flowers range from pure white to creamy white and pale pink. Purple fruits are typically tasteless and dry. Native to open forest and forest edges. They dislike hot dry conditions and alkaline soils. Cultivars are numerous and I have noted the best ones for our area.

'**Autumn Blaze**' selected for superior foliage, flower, fruit and autumn colors.

'**Rainbow Pillar**' ('**Glenn Form**') PP#9092 is a good tight upright form maturing in the 25' range, with bright white flowers. Its autumn rainbow of colors include: yellow, orange and red. Excellent for screening and tight landscapes.

Amelanchier canadensis – **Shadblow, Thicket Serviceberry** is native to Eastern North America from Maine to S. Carolina. Often combined with *A. arborea* in the nursery trade as they are so very similar. *A. canadensis* is a suckering colonizing shrub with erect stems 6' to 20' in height, and enjoys very moist to swamp conditions and even tolerates heavier clay soils. Erect 2-3" racemes of white flowers are followed by delicious juicy sweet black fruits. Autumn color is highly variable with yellows and occasional orang-red. *Amelanchier ovalis* is often included here as *A. canadensis* var. *ovalis*.

Amelanchier x grandiflora – **Apple Serviceberry** is a natural occurring hybrid between two of our native species, *A. arborea* and *A. laevis*. The newly emerging leaves are blushed bronzy-purple and are somewhat fuzzy. Flowers are a bit larger than both of its parents. Pinkish buds open with larger, than other species, white, slightly malodorous, flowers and are followed by sweet edible berries. Autumn foliage colors are as noted in the cultivar selections.

'**Autumn Brilliance**' is considered one of the finest tree types of *Amelanchier* on the market. Growing to about 25' tall with a 10-15' feet spread. Clean disease resistant foliage with excellent autumn colors in the red pallet that persists longer than the many other *Amelanchier*. Delicious fruits. Very resistant to *Entomosporium* leaf spot.

'**Ballerina**' is another one of the finest bushy types *Amelanchier* on the market, growing to about 15-20' high and about 1/2 as wide. Its new foliage emerges bronzy and mature to a glossy green and finishing the season with purple-bronze autumnal colors. Its flowers are a bit larger than the species at 1 1/4 to 1 1/2" in diameter and with larger, tasty, sweet fruits. Very resistant to *Entomosporium* leaf spot and fire blight.

'**Cole**' or '**Cole's Select**' is an upright yet more spreading form growing into the 20' high and wide range. Glossy green summer foliage with exceptional orange-red autumn color.

'**Cumulus**' is sometimes available, but is highly prone to fire blight. I don't recommend it.

'**Princes Diana**' PP# 6041 was discovered in Milwaukee, WI. Growing to more than 30' in height and almost the same in width, this a wonderful heavily white flowering form is followed by delicious fruits. Its autumn color is an outstanding red. It may be raised either as multi- or single trunked tree, however, it may sucker. Very resistant to *Entomosporium* leaf spot.

'**Strata**' was selected at the UW Arboretum for its horizontal branching on vertical main trunks. Very floriferous. Autumn color is tinged orange on yellow.

Amelanchier laevis – **Smooth Leaf Serviceberry, Allegheny Serviceberry** is native from Newfoundland to Georgia to Alabama and west to Michigan and Kansas. This is a small tree maturing in the 15-35' range with trunk diameters up to 12-18" range. The newly emerging foliage is bronzy and smooth. White flowers are born on nodding racemes and are followed by black, sweet, highly edible fruits. Autumn colors are noted below in the cultivars. Intolerant of salt.

'Majestic' aka **'Snowcloud'** is occasionally available and is a vigorous grower to about 30' tall and about ½ as wide. The thicker new foliage emerges dark reddish orange and matures to a dark green and ending the season with rich scarlet. Large pure with flowers in ~5" racemes. More resistant to diseases.

'Prince Charles' (PP# 6039) a more upright form in the 25' high and a bit less in width, it blooms with white flowers before the foliage. Bronzy red emerging spring foliage matures to a medium green in summer and an orange-red in the autumn. It has one of the best tasting fruits.

'Prince William' (PP# 6040) is probably a hybrid with *A. canadensis*. This is an upright shrubby slowly spreading form maturing in the 8-10' range and nearly unlimited in width. The reddish tinged emerging foliage matures to a rich glossy green and culminates in orange-red in the autumn. Sweet edible fruits. Selected in Madison, WI.

'R. J. Hillton' introduced by Agr. Canada Research Station, is a prolific bloomer and very sweet fruits. Hard to find.

***Amelanchier lamarckii* – Lamark Serviceberry** (commemorating Lamark, a French naturalist), **Juneberry, Snowy Mespilus** is a bit of enigma. This may be a hybrid between *A. canadensis* and *A. laevis*. Hybrid or not, it is an apomictic form that has its genetics along the eastern half of North America, but was taken to Europe in the 1700s. Since it is apomictic -- producing seeds without fertilization, all of its off-spring are virtually identical. Growing about 30', it produces a quite handsome tree with few if any suckers. White flowers are followed by sweet, edible purple-black edible berries. Autumn colors are orange to brick-red. Quite resistant to fire blight.

***Amelanchier stolonifera* – Running Serviceberry** is native to our east coast from Nantucket to Maine, New Jersey and New York. Growing 4-6' high as upright stiff stems forming a thicket shrub with a highly stoloniferous habit. This makes it excellent for slope stabilization and natural 'snow fencing'. Drooping racemes of white flowers are born with emerging silvery hairy leaves that mature to a medium rich green. Its fruits are purplish-black, smooth, sweet, juicy and delicious. Autumn colors are in shades of yellow, orange and reds. Tolerates non-alkaline drought heavier clay soils.

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