

***Amelanchier arborea* (Downy Serviceberry)**
Rose Family (Rosaceae)

Introduction:

Downy serviceberry is one of the largest serviceberries, growing up to 30 feet tall. It can grow into a single or multistemmed plant. The flowers are white, fragrant and followed by red-purple fruit.

Culture:

Downy serviceberry can be grown in full sun or partial shade. Balled-and-burlapped or container-grown plants should be transplanted into moist, well-drained, acidic soil. This tree is not tolerant of pollution and is unreliable when under stress. Downy serviceberry is hardy in Zones 4 to 9. This tree may be bothered by cedar serviceberry rust, witches-broom caused by a fungus, fire blight, leaf blight, powdery mildew, leaf miner, pear leaf blister mite, pear slug sawfly, willow scurfy scale and borers.

Additional information:

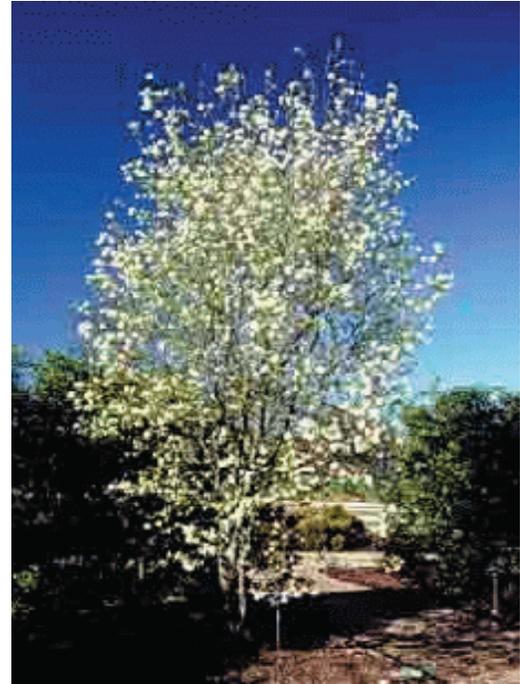
The name serviceberry comes from funeral or memorial service. This tree flowers very early in spring, about two weeks before dogwood. Legend has it that when the serviceberry was flowering it was finally warm enough to dig a grave and have a funeral service. Serviceberry is also known as sarvisberry. “Sarvis” is the Appalachian pronunciation of service.

All the serviceberries make good small landscape trees or multistemmed shrubs. Downy serviceberry is most effective when used in a naturalistic setting or with an evergreen background.

Serviceberry is a common understory tree in southeastern forests of North America. The wood of serviceberry is among the heaviest in the U.S., and would be more valuable if the trees grew larger.

Serviceberry’s fruit is used to make pies and sweetbreads and can be dried like raisins. Cherokees used serviceberry tea to aid digestion, and children who had worms were given baths in serviceberry tea. Native Americans used the tree’s straight wood to make arrow shafts.

Francois Michaux wrote of serviceberries being available in Philadelphia markets, but only children bought them.



Botanical Characteristics:

Native habitat: Maine to Iowa, as far south as northern Florida to Louisiana.

Growth habit: Small tree or multistemmed shrub with a rounded crown.

Tree size: Height ranges from 15 to 30 feet with a variable spread. Medium growth rate.

Flower and fruit: Perfect white flowers are borne in 2- to 4-inch-long pendulous racemes in early spring. Flowers are effective for only 4 to 7 days. Fruit is a berry-like pome that is 1/4- to 1/3-inch in diameter. Fruit changes from green to red to purplish black and ripens in June. Birds love the fruit.

Leaf: Leaves are alternate, simple, 1 to 3 inches long and medium to dark green. Fall color ranges from yellow to orange to deep red.

Hardiness: Winter hardy to USDA Zone 4. Serviceberries have good fall color and the bark is grayish and ornamental. The bark of downy serviceberry often has a reddish cast. It becomes ridged and furrowed as the tree ages.