

Crataegus crus-galli (Cockspur Hawthorn) Rose Family (Rosaceae)

Introduction:

Cockspur hawthorn has white flowers in spring and red fruit that persists late into fall. The tree gets its common name from the numerous 1½- to 3-inch-long thorns found on its stems. Like most hawthorns, this tree has serious pest problems.

Culture:

Cockspur hawthorn prefers full sun and well-drained soil. It will tolerate many soil types as well as pollution. It should be transplanted balled-and-burlapped in early spring, and should be pruned in winter or early spring. Leaf blotch miner and cedar hawthorn rust are serious problems suffered by cockspur hawthorn. Other diseases and insects that cause problems with hawthorns include fire blight, leaf blight, leaf spots, powdery mildew, rusts, borers, western tent caterpillars, aphids and lace bugs. Cockspur hawthorn is hardy in Zones 4 to 7, but performs best in Zones 4 to 6.

Additional information:

Cockspur hawthorn makes an attractive specimen; it can also be used for hedges. It is best to avoid its use in areas where children are likely to be playing, as its sharp thorns can cause serious injury.

Cockspur hawthorn blooms in May. Its white flowers have an unpleasant odor.

It is hard to grow grass under cockspur hawthorn because the tree has very dense branching.

The dark red fruit of cockspur hawthorn tends to persist late into fall because few birds eat it.

This tree was introduced into the landscape in 1656.

Co-national champion cockspur hawthorns are in Manassas, Va. (40 by 48 feet) and Central City, Ky. (33 by 30 feet).



Botanical Characteristics:

Native habitat: Quebec to North Carolina and Kansas.

Growth habit: Round tree with wide-spreading branches. Tree branches close to the ground and has numerous thorns.

Tree size: Reaches a height of 20 to 30 feet with a spread of 20 to 35 feet.

Flower and fruit: Perfect flowers are white and ½ to 2/3 of an inch in diameter. Flowers, which are borne in 2- to 3-inch corymbs, have an unpleasant odor. The tree flowers in May for about 7 to 10 days. Fruit is a deep red drupe that is 3/8 to ½ an inch in diameter. Fruit, which ripens in late September and October, persists into late fall.

Leaf: Leaves are alternate, simple, 1 to 4 inches long and 1/3 to 1½ inches wide. Leaves are glossy dark green in summer and bronze-red to purplish in fall.

Hardiness: Winter hardy to USDA Zone 4. downy serviceberry often has a reddish cast. It becomes ridged and furrowed as the tree ages.