

Crataegus viridis (Green Hawthorn) Rose Family (Rosaceae)

Introduction:

Green hawthorn is an adaptable, urban-tolerant tree that offers winter interest with its abundant and attractive orange-red fruit. It has pretty red to gold foliage in fall and handsome silver-gray peeling bark that shows orange underneath. Its lower branches need to be pruned in high-traffic areas where clearance is needed to a height of 6 to 8 feet above ground because of the tree's inch-long thorns. The species name *viridis* means green in Latin.

Culture:

This tree should be grown in full sun to help minimize its susceptibility to disease. It will adapt to all soil textures and can be grown in alkaline or acidic conditions. It is hardy to Zone 4. Green hawthorn is susceptible to cedar hawthorn rust, although less so than other hawthorns, and should not be grown in areas where eastern red cedar or other junipers are present. Its foliage may be bothered by aphids, borers, lacebugs, caterpillars and leaf miners.

Related species:

There are numerous hawthorn species available in the nursery trade. The most common species include *C. crus-galli*, *C. x lavalleyi*, and *C. phaenopyrum*.

Additional information:

The cultivar 'Winter King' of green hawthorn is the most commonly planted hawthorn. It is very dense, thus it is well-suited for use as a hedge.

'Winter King' was introduced in 1955. The cultivar is usually grafted onto Washington hawthorn rootstock.

Crataegus viridis was discovered by John Clayton, clerk of the court in Gloucester, Va., near Norfolk in the 18th century. Clayton sent the tree to Linnaeus for identification. Linnaeus included it as one of three North American hawthorns in his *Species Plantarum* in 1753.

'Winter King' hawthorn's outstanding ornamental characteristic is its attractive orange to red fruit that persists through winter. It needs to be pruned and staked early to develop a single trunk..



Botanical Characteristics:

Native habitat: Eastern North America south of Pennsylvania, west to Texas and Iowa.

Growth habit: Green hawthorn has a rounded, symmetrical, upright form.

Tree size: This tree grows to an average height of 20 to 30 feet with a similar spread. It has a moderate growth rate and a moderate to long life span.

Flower and fruit: Flowers are 3/4-inch in diameter with five white petals and grow in 2-inch clusters. The fruit of 'Winter King' is superior to that of the species. It is less than half an inch in diameter, round, fleshy, abundant, orange to red and persists in winter.

Leaf: This tree has dark green foliage in summer that changes to red to gold in fall. Leaves are simple, alternate and 1 to 2 inches long.

Hardiness: Winter hardy to USDA Zone 4.