

*By Elaine Mills, presenter of “Celebrating Native Trees”
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Chinese Weeping Willow (*Salix babylonica*), White Willow (*S. alba*), and Crack Willow (*S. fragilis*) are non-native species that can **spread invasively** from cultivation into natural areas.

- Female catkins contain numerous wind-borne seeds which germinate immediately on soil contact.
- Broken twigs of the trees can take root and colonize new areas when carried downstream, especially after floods.
- In addition, the trees’ aggressive root systems are drawn to water sources like pipes, causing problems for homeowners.

Downy Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*) mentioned in the presentation and other Rose Family members such as crabapples (*Malus* genus), pears (*Pyrus*) and quince (*Chaenomeles*), can suffer from **cedar-apple rust** when planted near either Eastern Redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) or prostrate junipers.

- The disease requires both hosts to be present within a mile of each other.
- The results of the disease are cosmetic, making the fruit unsightly and inedible, rather than life-threatening.
- For more information on the disease, see [“Cedar Apple and Related Rusts on Ornamentals”](#) from Penn State Extension.
- The regime for preventing rust diseases is quite arduous and is not recommended by our Extension agent. See the recording of her class on [“Fruit Producing Trees: Insect and Disease Management Strategies”](#) for more information.

On the question of **pruning Downy Serviceberry:**

- Root suckers can easily be removed as they appear each year to maintain the plant as a single-stemmed specimen.
- If the suckers are allowed to grow, the plant will grow as a shrub rather than a tree.
- Over time, suckers will form a colony.

During the Q&A session, a question was raised regarding shorter **cultivars of American Holly** (*Ilex opaca*).

- I mentioned the female, mound-forming, shrub-height cultivar ‘Maryland Dwarf’ which grows from 2 to 3 feet tall and spreads from 3 to 10 feet.
- Two female cultivars that grow 20 to 30 feet high and 10 to 15 feet wide are ‘Delia Bradley’ and ‘Greenleaf’ which are noted for their abundant fruit.
- The ‘William Hawkins’ male cultivar grows to about 15 feet at maturity, with a spread of 8 feet. It has unusually narrow and spiny evergreen foliage.

Regarding the question about **American Hollies not fruiting** in a woody area, Penn State Extension lists multiple factors that may affect fruit production by female trees.

- Lack of flower and fruit production may be due to poor growing conditions, such as extremely dry locations, exposure to desiccating winds, heavy shade, and poor soil drainage.
- Insect pollinators may have been scarce due to loss of habitat, use of herbicides nearby, or cold, rainy weather during bloom time.

On the question of **deer-resistance of Sweetbay Magnolia** (*Magnolia virginiana*), relatively few of the websites that provide such information list that tree species. Those that mention the tree (University of Maryland and North Carolina State University), describe it as resistant.

Regarding the expected **lifespan of a Flowering Dogwood** (*Cornus florida*):

- Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest lists the tree’s average life expectancy at 80 years.
- The Glen Arboretum at Towson University states that, if protected from disease and insects, the tree can live up to 125 years, with rapid growth lasting as long as 30 years.
- Care to promote a dogwood’s health includes:
 - Establishing a healthy root system, leaving plenty of space for growth
 - Mulching at a depth of 2 to 3 inches at a diameter of 10 feet around the trunk (but 6 inches away from the trunk itself)
 - Watering thoroughly and regularly in summer and fall, especially during first three years after planting
 - Providing shade in hot climates; this also helps protect from dogwood borer

Protecting trees from **Yellow-Belled Sapsucker damage** is a challenge. There are more than 250 species of woody plants that these birds may attack, including maple, pine, elm, apple, and dogwood. See this helpful [article from North Carolina Cooperative Extension](#) for an explanation of the problem and some suggested protective actions.

Some suggestions for **distinguishing male and female trees** of dioecious species when purchasing:

- Ask nurseries if they label the sex of their trees. Native-only sellers may be more likely to do this.
- Shop when the trees are in flower and look for anthers on male flowers to distinguish them from female flowers. A problem is that young trees may not be mature enough to flower.