

Crataegus crus-galli

Cockspur Hawthorn

Tried and True
Native Plant Selections
for the Mid-Atlantic



While this native* member of the rose family is found naturally in clearings, glades, woodland borders, and roadsides, it is a tough, adaptable tree that does well in urban settings. Its name refers to its long (≤ 3") thorns,** which are said to resemble the spurs of a cock.

Tree	Flowers, Spring Tree, Fruit, Fall Tree
Height: 20–35 feet	 
Spread: 25–35 feet	
Bloom Color: Creamy white	
Characteristics	
Small deciduous tree with rounded form, short, stout trunk and horizontal, thorny branches	 
Alternate , glabrous , dark green, spoon-shaped, finely toothed leaves; orange to scarlet fall foliage	
Corymbs (flat clusters) of creamy white flowers [some consider them malodorous] from May–June	
Small red pomes (haws) in fall persist into winter	
Spreads by suckers to form thickets	
Attributes	
Tolerates drought, pollution; susceptible to rusts, fireblight, leaf spots, mildew, and insect damage; deer occasionally browse young twigs & leaves	<p data-bbox="813 1723 1524 1787">Excellent Replacement for</p> <p data-bbox="813 1787 1524 1852">Morus alba - White Mulberry</p> <p data-bbox="813 1852 1524 1916">Pyrus calleryana - Callery ('Bradford') Pear</p>
Fruits*** edible but more showy than tasty	
Attracts various insects to flowers; songbirds and mammals to cover, nesting material, and fruit; larval host for Gray Hairstreak, Striped Hairstreak, Red-spotted Purple, and Viceroy butterflies and moths	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	
Soil Requirements : Average, Well-drained	<p data-bbox="813 1991 1524 2153">*In the Mid-Atlantic Region, it is native to DC and MD. Its status is undetermined in DE. It is scattered in southern PA, mostly concentrated in the southeast corner. It is frequent to common in the mountains and infrequent eastward in VA. In NoVA, it is native to Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William counties.</p> <p data-bbox="813 2153 1524 2247">**Thorns can cause significant injury. The variety <i>Crataegus crus-galli</i> var. <i>inermis</i> is thornless as is its cultivar 'Cruzam' CRUSADER® that also claims resistance to rust on fruits.</p> <p data-bbox="813 2247 1524 2284">***Avoid planting in well-trafficked areas due to potential fruit litter.</p>
Light Requirements : Sun	
Water Requirements : Moist	
Prune in winter or early spring; watch out for thorns	
Plant away from cedar to minimize rust diseases	
Use as an ornamental accent or barrier hedge or for erosion control on slopes	
Hardiness : USDA Zones 4–7	
developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria	

Images by Elaine Mills, Arlington, Virginia



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