

Garden Column for the Salisbury Post

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Spring color from native and ornamental trees paints the landscapes around the county. The perfect companion tree for dogwood is the redbud (*Cercis canadensis*). I've often wondered why the tree was called redbuds when the blooms are more rosy-pink with a purple tinge. Many often ask about small trees for the landscape. I never hesitate to recommend redbuds.

Redbuds are native to this area, growing as far south as northern Florida and as far north as New Jersey extending west to Mexico. Redbuds grow with a flat topped to rounded crown in both sun and shade reaching a maximum height of 20-25 feet. It can grow as multi stem or trained to single trunk tree preferring moist soils from clays to loams. It is the perfect compliment to dogwoods which are in full bloom now. Redbuds do well massed with dogwood in wooded landscapes or as single specimen plants.

There are quite a few cultivars brought to North Carolina from as far away as Korea. The J.C. Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh has one if not the largest redbud collection in the world. The name is very misleading as flowers of different cultivars range from what to pure pink. Being a true legume, the flower is pea-like producing interesting seed pods. Named varieties may also have glossy or purple leafed forms.

If redbuds have one problem, it would have to be its relatively short life. Most native trees have problems with canker and *Verticillium* wilt but the newer cultivars have disease resistance. Insect pests are usually not a threat in our area.

Below are cultivars that are worth the extra effort to locate.

Cercis Canadensis cultivars

'Alba'--white flowers

'Royal White' is a cultivar has larger flowers and a more

compact form than variety Alba.

'Forest Pansy'-purple leaved type, shiny leaves, flowers are rose purple and later than native redbud. One of the most popular in Rowan County.

'Pink Charm'--Flowers are soft pink without purple tint.

'Oklahoma'--Grafted variety, moderate grower to 15 feet tall and wide, may develop multiple trunks.

'Flame' This is a double pink form.

Weeping Redbud 'Lavender Twist' is a weeping form of redbud that is now available at selected nurseries and garden centers. This grafted variety is from a tree discovered in the little town of Westfield, New York.

The Chinese redbud (*Cercis chinensis*) a distant cousins to the native redbud is a small, multi-stemmed shrub that grows 6 to 10 feet tall and wide. Its rosy purple flowers are showier and more profuse than Eastern Redbud. Leaves are also thicker. Cultivars 'Avondale' and 'Don Egolf' are popular cultivars.

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