

## MAY HAWTHORN

*Crataegus aestivalis* Walt.

Plant Symbol = CRAE

Contributed By: USDA NRCS National Plant Data Center



R. Mohlenbrock  
USDA, NRCS, Wetland Sciences Institute  
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### Uses

**Erosion Control:** Because it tolerates a wide variety of sites, it can be planted to stabilize banks, for shelterbelts, and from wind and water erosion.

**Timber:** Although the wood is hard and strong, it has no commercial value except for tool handles and other small items. Fruits are often gathered for jellies.

**Wildlife:** It provides excellent cover and nesting sites for many smaller birds. Birds, rodents, and other smaller mammals eat the small fruits. White tailed deer browse the young twigs and leaves.

**Beautification/landscape:** It is used in beautification project around homes, city streets, and office

buildings. It is excellent for environmental plantings, including small specimen tree and shrub borders.

### Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status, such as, state noxious status and wetland indicator values.

### Description

**General:** It is a spiny tree that grows to forty feet high and fifteen inches DBH. Leaves are narrow, broadest above or near the middle, dark green and shiny, serrated, seldom lobed and smooth. Flowers are white, produced singly or in two or three flowered clusters. Fruits are broadest above the middle or rounded, and red in color.

**Distribution:** May hawthorn grows on the outer coastal plain from North Carolina to Mississippi. For current distribution, please consult the plant profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

### Adaptation

Although it will succeed in partial shade and different soil types, it grows best in full sunlight, well-drained loamy soils. May hawthorn will tolerate wet soils becoming drought tolerant once established. It is wind tolerant making it a good tree species in shelterbelt planting. It is also tolerant of atmospheric pollution and performs well in urban settings. It is commonly found in river swamps, pond areas, and stream banks.

### Establishment

**Propagation from Seed or Grafting:** May hawthorn can be propagated by either seeds or grafting. Successful propagation using seeds requires acid scarification followed by warm stratification and prechilling. Seeds, whose numbers per pound (lb.) varies with species, are planted early in the fall, in drill rows eight to twelve inches apart and covered with 1/4 inch of soil. Seedlings must not be kept in the nursery longer than a year.

Containerized trees should be planted when they are no more than eight feet tall, in the fall or early spring. Balled and burlapped trees should be planted in early spring.

Grafting on seedling stock of *Crataegus oxyacantha* or *Crataegus monogyna* is best carried out in the winter to early spring.

### Management

Pruning should be done in the winter or early spring in order to maintain a clear shoot leader on young trees and/or remove the weakest branches to allow more light to pass through. Suckers or stems arising from the roots should be removed when they become noticeable.

### Pest and Potential Problems

Although pests and diseases seldom affect *Crataegus aestivalis*, it is susceptible to fire-blight, cedar-hawthorn rust, cedar-quince rust, leaf blight and fruit rot, and leaf spot.

### Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Consult your local nurseries to choose the right cultivar for your specific landscape.

Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service) office for more information. Look in the phone book under "United States Government." The Natural Resources Conservation Service will be listed under the subheading "Department of Agriculture."

### References

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Edited: 18apr02 jsp; 25feb03 ahv; 05jun06 jsp

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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