

Spring-Flowering Trees for Kentucky

Flowering trees add a lot of color and interest to your landscape. It is important to choose the right type of blooming tree to be sure it is well suited to your particular yard and site. Although most blooming trees prefer full sun, there are some that will perform best in partial-full shade. Please see the following list of some beautiful spring-blooming trees for our area from which you may want to choose.

Eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)- Small, understory tree with a rounded growth habit that grows 20-30' by 25-30' wide. Does best in partial shade. Redbuds have stunning pea-like rose-purple flowers that cover the bare branches before the leaves emerge in March/April. There is also a particular cultivar (variety) called 'Forest Pansy' that has purplish foliage, does well in full sun and that has the same attractive blooms.



Carolina Silverbell (*Halesia caroliniana*)- One of the best native trees for shady areas well suited for woodland borders or as a lawn tree. It grows 30-40' in height and has

a spread of 20-35'. They have white (occasionally pale rose-colored) bell-shaped flowers in clusters in April-early May with its flowers emerging before or at the same time as the leaves.



Star Magnolia (*Magnolia stellata*)- Small, rounded shrub or small tree that can be used as a specimen or accent plant. It grows to a height of 15-20' in height with a spread about 10-15' wide. Star Magnolias have fragrant, showy, white flowers, 3-4" in diameter and bloom in the early spring before the trees leaf out typically in March-early April. Flowers can be susceptible to late spring freezes. For best flowering, plant in a sunny location. Star magnolias have dark green leaves that are light green on the undersides.



Tulip (Saucer) Magnolia (*Magnolia x soulangeana*)- Small, specimen tree that grows to a height of 20-30' with an equal spread. Flowers typically appear before the leaves emerge in March-April, but sometimes appear at the same time. They can range from white to pink to purplish depending on the cultivar, but most are typically pinkish-purplish on the outside and white in the center.



Flowering cherry (*Prunus* species)- Flowering cherry trees have beautiful showy single or double pink blooms in spring in March-April in our area. They can range in size from 20-40' with different growth habits ranging from rounded, spreading growth habits to interesting weeping forms. Higan Cherry or Kwanzan Cherry are two common types grown in our area. Weeping cultivars such as *Prunus subhirtella pendula*, 'Plendula Plena Rosea', and 'Pendula Rosea' are also available.



Flowering Crabapples (*Malus* species)- A large, diverse group of spring blooming

trees that range in size from dwarf species to very large types that reach up to 25-35' tall. Flowering crabapples typically bloom in April and depending on the cultivar, flower colors range from white to pink to a dark reddish-purple. Most crabapples bear attractive fruit that develop after the flowers drop and persist into the fall. The birds love them! Fruits can range in size from less than 3/8" in diameter up to 2" or so and can be different colors ranging from different shades of red--yellow. It is important to plant crabapples that are resistant to common spring fungal diseases as apple scab, cedar-apple rust, etc., which can cause leaf spotting, premature leaf drop in the summer, etc. Here are a few of the more disease resistant cultivars of crabapples from which to choose- 'Floribunda', 'Red Jade', 'Harvest Gold', 'Prairiefire', 'Sargent', etc.



Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)- Flowering dogwoods are small, specimen trees that bloom in April-May with showy white, pink, or red flowers. At maturity, they can reach heights of 30-40' but more range about 20' or so. Their showy flowers develop into pretty glossy red fruits in the fall and birds love them. They also have an excellent persistent fall color turning shades of red to reddish purplish. Flowering dogwoods are considered understory trees

and perform best in partial shade, although you often see them planted in full sun.



Kousa Dogwood (*Cornus kousa*)- Also called Chinese dogwood. Kousa dogwoods are handsome specimen trees or shrubs. These dogwoods perform best in full sun and bloom in May-June about two-three weeks later typically than the flowering dogwoods. They range in size from 20-30' high with an equal spread. They have very showy creamy white bracts that are raised



above the foliage creating a “milky way effect” along the horizontal branches. Kousa dogwoods have attractive pinkish red-red fruits that resemble raspberries that begin appearing in late August.



They have an attractive fall color ranging from yellow, gold, amber, orange, to reddish-purple and beautiful exfoliating bark as they age forming a mosaic of tan, gray, and brown.