Redbuds

Spring Grandeur from Around the World

Redbuds are one of our showiest native trees. Drive south on I-95 near the end of March or early April and you’re sure to enjoy a colorful display of redbuds along the roadside. Although redbuds have been in the trade for decades, you do not see them frequently planted in gardens. What you see along roadways doesn’t begin to represent the variation possible in our native species. Redbuds offer incredible genetic diversity and in the past few years, breeders have introduced a number of exciting new cultivars of both the native redbud and Asian species for use in many different landscape sizes.

The native range of eastern redbud runs from New Jersey to Florida, west to Texas and into Mexico. This wide range has created variation to the point that some authors list three or four species of redbud native in the U.S., not counting the western U.S. redbud. Typically, these variants are treated as botanical varieties or subspecies. The selections native to Texas and Mexico have brilliantly glossy foliage. Several species native to the Middle East and Asia greatly add to the variability of the genus.

Redbuds are grown primarily for the deep colored flower buds and subsequent flowers. Flower color may range from white, to pale pink, deep pink and magenta but there is no true red flowered (or red budded) redbud. The mid- to late-April floral display in northern Delaware is a sight to behold. Bare branches are covered with tightly packed clusters of flowers, nearly obscuring the branches. Our native redbud and most Asian and Middle Eastern species can be considered either large shrubs or small trees, perfect for smaller residential landscapes. The one exception is the Chinese redbud, which is shrubbier. Most redbuds provide shade if limbed up or serve as a screen if lower branches are kept. New in the trade are several dwarf and weeping cultivars which serve as accent plants in groupings or as specimens.

The fall foliage on redbuds is typically bright yellow, beckoning the last days of autumn before gracefully falling to the ground. A new selection called ‘Hearts of Gold’ displays golden or chartreuse foliage throughout the growing season. As the foliage falls, numerous seedpods drape the branches. Adaptable to bright sun or light shade and moist to dry soils, redbuds are fairly low-care plants. Redbuds do not do well in poorly drained soils.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin Name</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Mature Size</th>
<th>Light</th>
<th>Soil</th>
<th>Pot Size, Plant Size</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cercis canadensis ’Ace of Hearts’ PP</strong></td>
<td>Eastern Redbud</td>
<td>15’</td>
<td>☀️</td>
<td>☀️</td>
<td>7 g, 4-5’</td>
<td>$85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cercis canadensis ’Appalachian Red’</strong></td>
<td>Eastern Redbud</td>
<td>20-25’</td>
<td>☀️</td>
<td>☀️</td>
<td>15 g, 5-7’</td>
<td>$95</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cercis canadensis ’Covey’ Lavender Twist®</strong></td>
<td>Eastern Redbud</td>
<td>4-8’</td>
<td>☀️</td>
<td>☀️</td>
<td>1 g, 1-2’</td>
<td>$25</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cercis canadensis ’Forest Pansy’</strong></td>
<td>Eastern Redbud</td>
<td>20-30’</td>
<td>☀️</td>
<td>☀️</td>
<td>3 g, 3-5’</td>
<td>$45</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cercis canadensis ’Hearts of Gold’</strong></td>
<td>Eastern Redbud</td>
<td>15-25’</td>
<td>☀️</td>
<td>☀️</td>
<td>1 g, 2’</td>
<td>$35</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Cercis canadensis ‘Silver Cloud’
Eastern Redbud

Everything in moderation is the motto of this plant. Although variegated, the indiscriminate white splashes in the dark green leaves are display that contrast with the solid green of other plants in the summer garden. Flowers are rose-pink.

Cercis canadensis subsp. texensis ‘Traveller’
Texas Redbud

The glossy foliage emerges coppery red with a distinct wavy margin and leathery texture. The diminutive size and broad, weeping habit are reminiscent of a Japanese maple. Abundant, rose-purple flowers outline the branch architecture.

Cercis chinensis ‘Nondale’
Chinese Redbud

Stunning for the bare stems studded in deep, rich rose-purple flowers in the spring, ‘Nondale’ blooms before the leaves emerge. The flowers are so closely packed that the stems are barely visible in the spring. Shorter and shrubbier than our native redbud.

Cercis chinensis ‘Shirobana’
Chinese Redbud

A shrubby, compact plant with multiple stems, the Chinese redbud brightens the spring landscape with its abundant, pure white flowers heavily adorning the branches.

Cercis gigantea Giant Redbud

This species from China may be the largest of the redbuds. Plants show extraordinary vigor, growing 17 ft. in 6 years at the J. C. Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh, North Carolina. The leaves are large, 6 to 8 in. across, and the rose-pink flowers are a larger size but a lighter color than other species.

Cercis griffithii Afghanistan Redbud

Closely related to the Judas tree (C. siliquastrum) and as the name suggests, Afghanisn Redbud is native to the Middle East. Useful as a small tree under-planted with perennials. The pale, rose-magenta flowers persist longer than our native species, and are present when the foliage emerges.

Cercis occidentalis Western Redbud

With a native range from Oregon south to Arizona, Western Redbud can be a shrubby plant 6 to 12 ft. tall to a small tree 20 ft. tall. Distinctive blue green color leaves and rich rose-pink flowers are enhancing attributes. Literature varies as to hardiness: Plants we offer are from a northern source and plants of this species are growing in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Cercis racemosa
Chain-Flowered Redbud

Many references refer to this as the most attractive redbud. Flowers are borne on 2 to 4 in. long, dangling racemes, providing a spectacular spring display. The late J. C. Raulston described it as the “most beautiful redbud in existence,” while John Frett is “amazed and enamored with the novelty of the flowers.” Questions of hardiness exist, Dr. Frett weighs in as hardy to zone 6 while others rate hardy to zone 7.