Blackthorn

Prunus spinosa



Blackthorn flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 12 feet

Spread: 10 feet

Sunlight:

Hardiness Zone: 3

Other Names: Sloe

Description:

A distinctive relative of the plum with creamy white flowers in spring followed by astringent blue-black fruit which can be used for jams, also used for making sloe gin; extremely thorny habit, makes an impenetrable barrier or screen

Ornamental Features

Blackthorn is smothered in stunning clusters of creamy white flowers along the branches in early spring before the leaves. It has dark green deciduous foliage. The oval leaves do not develop any appreciable fall color. The fruits are showy deep purple drupes with silvery blue overtones, which are displayed in early fall. The fruit can be messy if allowed to drop on the lawn or walkways, and may require occasional clean-up. The smooth black bark adds an interesting dimension to the landscape.

This plant is primarily grown as an ornamental, but it's also valued for its edible qualities. The round tart fruit is most often used in the following ways:

- Preserves

Landscape Attributes

Blackthorn is a multi-stemmed deciduous shrub with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its average texture blends into the landscape, but can be balanced by one or two finer or coarser trees or shrubs for an effective composition.

This shrub will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and is best pruned in late winter once the threat of extreme cold has passed. It is a good choice for attracting birds to your yard. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spiny

Blackthorn is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- Hedges/Screening
- General Garden Use
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens

Planting & Growing

Blackthorn will grow to be about 12 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 10 feet. It has a low canopy with a typical clearance of 4 feet from the ground, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a fast rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 30 years. This is a self-pollinating variety, so it doesn't require a second plant nearby to set fruit.

This shrub should only be grown in full sunlight. It is quite adaptable, prefering to grow in average to wet conditions, and will even tolerate some standing water. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. It is not particular as to soil type or pH. It is highly tolerant of urban pollution and will even thrive in inner city environments. This species is not originally from North America.