American Plum

Prunus americana

Height: 20 feet

Spread: 15 feet

Sunlight:

Hardiness Zone: 2

Other Names: Red Plum, Wild Plum

Description:

A small native tree or large shrub covered in fragrant white flowers in spring followed by tart red fruit, excellent for jams; regular pruning will keep it looking its best, needs full sun and well-drained soil, an excellent pollinator for other plums

Edible Qualities

American Plum is a small tree that is typically grown for its edible qualities. It produces small gold round fruit (technically 'drupes') with a ruby-red blush and yellow flesh which are usually ready for picking in mid summer. Note that the fruits have hard inedible pits inside which must be removed before eating or processing. The fruits have a tart taste and a fleshy texture.

The fruit are most often used in the following ways:

- Preserves

Features & Attributes

American Plum is clothed in stunning clusters of fragrant white flowers along the branches in early spring before the leaves. It has green deciduous foliage. The pointy leaves turn an outstanding yellow in the fall. The fruits are showy gold drupes with a ruby-red blush, which are displayed in mid summer. The fruit can be messy if allowed to drop on the lawn or walkways, and may require occasional clean-up. The smooth brown bark adds an interesting dimension to the landscape.



American Plum fruit
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



American Plum in bloom
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

This is a multi-stemmed deciduous tree with a spreading, ground-hugging 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 plant 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;

- Messy
- Disease

Aside from its primary use as an edible, American Plum is sutiable for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Hedges/Screening
- Orchard/Edible Landscaping



American Plum flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Planting & Growing

American Plum will grow to be about 20 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 15 feet. It has a low canopy with a typical clearance of 3 feet from the ground, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a medium 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 tree is typically grown in a designated area of the yard because of its mature size and spread. It should only be grown in full sunlight. It does best in average to evenly moist conditions, but will not tolerate 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 somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is native to parts of North America.