



Thursday, May 1, 2025

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How to Grow Redbud Trees



Photo Credit: Kabar

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Planting, growing, and pruning Eastern Redbuds

By [Andy Wilcox](#)

Last Updated: March 17, 2025



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The colorful Eastern Redbud tree is a favorite flowering beauty. Looking for some bright spring color when all else is drab? Need a small-to medium-sized tree to fill a gap? Learn how to plant, grow, and care for eastern redbuds.

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About Redbuds

Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) is a small-ish flowering tree native to North America. Flowers bloom in spring before the foliage appears, and the tree is loved for its relatively long-lasting display of pink to purple color.

It is modest-sized, 20 to 30 feet tall and wide at maturity, and grows at a medium rate of 12-18 inches per year, although young trees can grow faster. They typically reach 10 feet tall in about 6 years.

Redbuds in the landscape make fantastic specimen trees or anchors to perennial beds. As natural understory trees, they can be used to create a tiered effect with larger trees behind them, especially for yards that currently

tions to our eyes and provides multiple levels of habitat for birds and insects.

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Eastern Redbuds serve as an important nectar source for early-season insects, and their seeds are enjoyed in autumn by northern bobwhites and chickadees.

Weeping Redbuds can make a dramatic show in your yard and, in summer, can provide a secret spot for a garden bench. Eastern redbuds make dramatic edges to woodland areas in small groupings. They are ideal for providing light shade in garden beds full of perennials.



*Eastern redbud tree in full bloom. Credit:
Marie C Fields.*

Read Next

- [How to Grow a Dogwood Tree](#)
- [How to Grow Larkspurs: The Complete Larkspur Flower Guide](#)
- [20 Pink Flowers for Your Garden \(With Pictures!\)](#)

PLANTING

When to Plant Redbuds

Redbuds can be planted in either spring or fall. If planting in autumn, try to get the tree in the ground 4-6 weeks before your first frost. [Bare root trees](#) should be planted as soon as they arrive.

Where to Plant Redbuds

Eastern redbuds grow at a medium rate but

planted in full sun, they have a more round, lollipop shape; they are loftier, open, and airy when planted in partial shade.

These trees tolerate most soil conditions as long as the extremes of wet and dry are avoided. They are adaptable to many soil types and are not picky about pH.

How to Plant Redbuds

Planting redbuds is easy, and the same methods are used for planting other nursery stock. If planting bare-root trees, soak the roots in a bucket of water for 12 hours before planting.

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1. Remove any sod from the area, and use it to fill in holes in your yard.

2. Dig a hole the same depth as the root ball and twice as wide. The hole should look like a shallow bowl, not a coffee cup.
3. Loosen the soil at the edges and bottom of the hole. Don't leave hard, compacted sides or bottoms that will be difficult for roots to penetrate (or for water to drain).
4. Remove the tree from its container and prune all circling or girdling roots. Rootbound plants will benefit from the scoring of the root ball to stimulate new growth in outward directions.
5. Test fit the redbud in the hole. Check for depth and ensure no roots are bent over or circling in the hole. Enlarge the hole if necessary.
6. Backfill the hole with the soil you removed, ensuring the tree is kept vertical while filling. Stop when the hole is filled halfway and tamp the soil firmly around the roots to remove air pockets, then provide a good drink of water. Continue filling the soil around the roots and firming it with your hands.

extending 2-3 feet from the trunk. Don't allow the mulch to touch the trunk—keep an inch or two of separation. The final mulch job should look like a flat disc, not a mound.

[Learn more about planting bare root trees.](#)

GROWING

How to Grow Redbuds

Redbuds grow quickly when young and then slow to a medium growth rate. Provide supplemental watering while the tree is establishing and during extended dry periods.

Prune redbuds when young for shaping. They can be trained as multi-trunk or single-trunked plants.

How to Prune Redbuds

Prune any undesired branches in winter when the tree is dormant or after flowering is complete in spring. Remove crossing, twisted, or suckering branches. Diseased or broken branches can be removed at any time of year.



Eastern redbuds are cooperative in propagating from seed and challenging in doing so from cuttings.

Winter sowing makes planting these a snap, but you can collect and dry seed, too.

- Collect seeds when the pods have turned brown in autumn.
- Ripe seeds can be immediately planted into the ground in the fall, allowing nature to do the work for you. Otherwise,
- Remove the seeds from the pods and air-dry them for storage until they are ready to plant.
- Eastern redbud seeds have a stout coating and need cold to break embryo dormancy.
- Soak seeds in boiling water for 1 minute, then remove.
- Cold-stratify seeds in the refrigerator for 60 days to break dormancy.
- Plant the soaked and stratified seeds in standard potting mix $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep. Keep moist until germination occurs.

If you'd like to try propagating redbud from cuttings, try this method. Good luck!

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- Take softwood cuttings 4-6 inches long.
- Treat cuttings with 8000 ppm (0.8%) IBA talc.
- Stick in 1:1 coir and perlite mix and provide humidity (plastic bags or humidity domes and frequent misting can simulate nursery propagation misting).
- Provide bottom heat at 70-75°F until rooting begins.
- Keep the ambient temperature at 75F, no colder.

- Once rooting commences, provide supplemental lighting (12 hours daily) to encourage faster root development.

Types

- 'Appalachian Red' - deep colored buds unfurl to reveal neon pink blooms.
- 'Forest Pansy' - bright purple foliage emerges and slowly deepens in color, fading to dark green. Foliage may keep a purple tinge through the season in regions with cool summer weather.
- 'Lavender Twist' - lovely umbrella-shaped, cascading habit. A perfect spot for a garden bench.



Eastern Redbuds as classic understory natives. Credit: Gerry Bishop

GARDENING PRODUCTS



PESTS/DISEASES

- Scale insects
- Verticillium wilt

WIT AND WISDOM

- Cercis (the genus name) comes from the Greek word *kerkis*, meaning weaver's shuttle, referring to the shape of a shuttle used on a loom.
- Redbuds can be very sensitive to herbicides. Take care if you or a neighbor use chemicals on the lawn.

- George Washington reportedly transplanted redbuds from nearby woods into his gardens.

SHRUBS AND TREES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andy Wilcox



Andy Wilcox is a flower farmer and master gardener with a passion for soil health, small producers, forestry, and horticulture. [Read More from Andy Wilcox](#)

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COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

Sid Kay (not verified) 7 months ago

now the branches are reaching over 5 feet! I am
wondering how many years it will take for the tree
to start flowering?

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Dr Eric Aschendorf (not verified) 1 year ago

I love & hate Redbud trees! They are pretty, BUT!
But they are what I identify as "Dry Trees." By "Dry
Trees" I mean they do not "SEEM" to have much
moisture in them. They are constantly dropping
branches & here, in the MidWest where they grow
whether you want them or not, that means you
must be careful where they grow or you may lose
part of your barn, garage &/or house.

[REPLY](#)

mary beth shipley (not verified) 1 year
ago

My husband and I feel same way. We love
their beauty, but they're not good around
the house or cars. Falling blossoms can
stain the paint on a car. My husband also
calls them eye pokers because the
branches grow straight out at eye level.

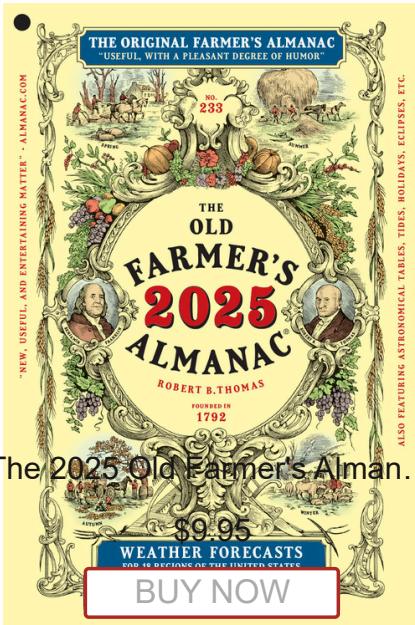
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[REPLY](#)**Bob (not verified)** 8 months ago

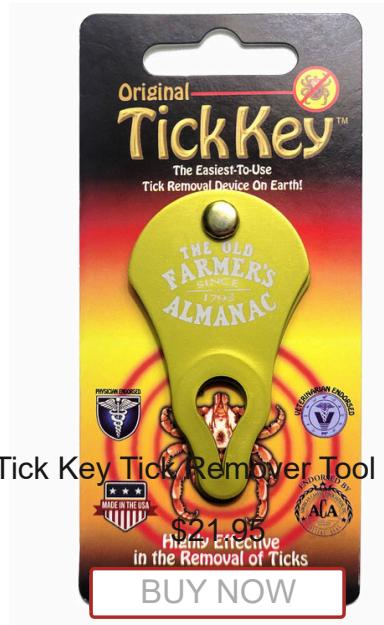
Well, stay away from redbuds if you're blind and can't see a branch sticking out. They're beautiful, I can't imagine someone griping because of branches. If you're not lazy, just trim them a little! 😊

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