**Crataegus aestivalis**
**May Hawthorn**

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

**INTRODUCTION**

This slow-growing native North American tree reaches a height of 30 feet with a rounded canopy that spreads to 35 feet or more (Fig. 1). The dark green, deciduous leaves are often three-lobed and have red/brown undersides. The leaves display no appreciable fall color. The sparkling white, showy springtime flowers appear before the new leaves unfurl and are followed by the production of large, red-dotted fruits. The spreading, low branching habit of growth makes this best suited for planting in a large open area of turf. If regular pruning can be provided to keep low, drooping branches pruned, it can be located closer to a walk.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Scientific name:** Crataegus aestivalis  
**Pronunciation:** kruh-TEE-gus ess-tih-VAY-liss  
**Common name(s):** May Hawthorn, Apple Hawthorn  
**Family:** Rosaceae  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 6 through 11 (Fig. 2)  
**Origin:** native to North America  
**Uses:** recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; reclamation plant; screen; specimen  
**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

![Figure 1. Middle-aged May Hawthorn.](image)

**DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 20 to 30 feet  
**Spread:** 35 to 40 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms  
**Crown shape:** spreading; vase shape  
**Crown density:** dense  
**Growth rate:** slow  
**Texture:** fine

---

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-209, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.

2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.
Crataegus aestivalis -- May Hawthorn

**Foliage**

- **Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)
- **Leaf type:** simple
- **Leaf margin:** crenate; serrate
- **Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); obovate
- **Leaf venation:** pinnate
- **Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous
- **Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches; less than 2 inches
- **Leaf color:** green
- **Fall color:** no fall color change
- **Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

- **Flower color:** white
- **Flower characteristics:** showy; spring flowering

**Fruit**

- **Fruit shape:** round
- **Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch
- **Fruit covering:** fleshy
- **Fruit color:** red
- **Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

**Trunk and Branches**

- **Trunk/bark/branches:** droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns
- **Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure
- **Breakage:** resistant
- **Current year twig color:** brown
- **Current year twig thickness:** medium; thin

**Culture**

- **Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
- **Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
- **Drought tolerance:** moderate
- **Soil salt tolerance:** poor
Figure 3. Foliage of May Hawthorn.

Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding  
**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** not known to be susceptible  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

May Hawthorn should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained, moist soils. According to Dr. J. C. Raulston at North Carolina State University, this may be one of the best Hawthorns for the south due to superior disease resistance.