**Pyrus calleryana** ‘Bradford’

‘Bradford’ Callery Pear

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

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**INTRODUCTION**

‘Bradford’ is the original introduction of Callery Pear and has an inferior branching habit when compared to other cultivars which have since been developed (Fig. 1). It has many vertical limbs with embedded bark packed closely on the trunk and grows about 40 feet high by 30 to 45 feet wide but the crown is dense and the branches long and not tapered, making it quite susceptible to wind and ice damage and other breakage. However, it does put on a gorgeous, early spring display of pure white blossoms, and the small, red/brown fruits which follow will attract quite a number of birds who find them delicious. Fruit set may be increased by planting two or more cultivars of Callery Pear together. Fall color is incredible, ranging from red and orange to dark maroon.

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**GENERAL INFORMATION**

- **Scientific name:** *Pyrus calleryana* ‘Bradford’
- **Pronunciation:** PIE-rus kal-ler-ee-AY-nuh
- **Common name(s):** ‘Bradford’ Callery Pear
- **Family:** Rosaceae
- **USDA hardiness zones:** 5 through 9A (Fig. 2)
- **Origin:** not native to North America
- **Uses:** container or above-ground planter; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; screen; shade tree; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns

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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.
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 30 to 40 feet  
**Spread:** 30 to 40 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms  
**Crown shape:** oval; round  
**Crown density:** dense  
**Growth rate:** fast  
**Texture:** medium

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** crenate; serrate  
**Leaf shape:** ovate  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate; reticulate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous  
**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches; less than 2 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** orange; purple; red; yellow  
**Fall characteristic:** showy

**Flower**

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

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** round  
**Fruit length:** < .5 inch  
**Fruit covering:** dry or hard  
**Fruit color:** brown; tan  
**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; no thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure
Breakage: susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break
Current year twig color: brown
Current year twig thickness: thick

Culture
Light requirement: tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; occasionally wet; alkaline; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerance: moderate

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
Ozone sensitivity: tolerant
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: not known to be susceptible
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

The major problem with the ‘Bradford’ Callery Pear has been too many upright branches growing too closely together on the trunk. Prune the trees early in their life to space lateral branches along a central trunk. This is not easy and a skilled pruning crew is needed to build a stronger tree. Even following pruning by a skilled crew, trees often look misshappen with most of the lower foliage removed and the lower portions of the multiple trunks showing. This tree probably was not meant to be pruned, but without pruning has a short life, thus ‘Bradford’ Pear defines a Catch-22.

Callery Pear trees are shallow-rooted and will tolerate most soil types including clay and alkaline, are pest- and pollution-resistant, and tolerate soil compaction, drought and wet soil well. ‘Bradford’ is the most fireblight-resistant cultivar of the Callery Pears. Unfortunately, as ‘Bradford’ and some of the other cultivars approach 20 years old, they begin to fall apart in ice and snow storms due to inferior, tight branch structure. But they are certainly beautiful and grow extremely well in urban soil until then and probably will continue to be planted because of their urban toughness. As you plan downtown street tree plantings, remember that in downtown sites many other trees succumb before this one due to a variety of reasons, but the Callery Pears seem to hang on pretty well despite the problems with branch attachments and multiple trunks.

‘Autumn Blaze’ has wonderful fall color earlier than other cultivars.

Pests
Aphids cause distorted growth and deposits of honeydew.

Scales can be seen on ‘Bradford’ but usually they are not serious.

Several borers may attack pear. Keep trees healthy to prevent attacks.

Diseases
Slightly susceptible to fireblight when grown in the south but the damage is usually only noticed at branch tips. ‘Bradford’ shows the best resistance to
fire blight in tests conducted in the southeast of all Callery Pear cultivars tested.

Tips of fire blight-infected branches appear scorched and burnt. The leaves droop, turn brown, but remain hanging on the tree. The bacteria wash down the branch and form cankers. Bark inside the canker often shreds and peels. When a canker girdles a branch, that branch dies. The Callery Pears are resistant, but not immune to this disease and some cultivars are apparently more resistant than others. Prune out infected branches well below the infected area.