



Prunus sargentii 'Columnaris' Columnar Sargent Cherry¹

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INTRODUCTION

With attractive bark, good fall foliage color, and delicate pink blooms, Columnar Sargent Cherry is highly recommended for the home and urban landscape (Fig. 1). Growing at a moderate rate into a 25 to 35-foot-high and 15 feet wide, upright to vase shaped tree, Sargent Cherry makes an ideal street tree casting moderate shade below. It is often grown with several multiple trunks or upright branches originating from the same position on the trunk ascending in a graceful fashion. This structure could be somewhat of a problem in ice-storms. Training to develop well-spaced branches along the trunk may help reduce this problem. The attractive cinnamon brown bark has a shiny, almost polished appearance with prominent lenticels arranged around the trunk. In late April or early May the one-inch-wide, pink to deep pink single blooms appear before the new red-tinged leaves unfold. The small, pea-sized fruits which follow are red, ripening to a dark purple in June and July. The fruits are considered inconspicuous due to their size and color but are easily found by birds who quickly devour them. The three to five-inch-long, shiny, dark green leaves take on various shades of orange, bronze, and red before dropping in late September, often well before other trees which are still green.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Prunus sargentii* 'Columnaris'

Pronunciation: PROO-nus sar-JEN-tee-eye

Common name(s): Columnar Sargent Cherry

Family: *Rosaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 8A (Fig. 2)

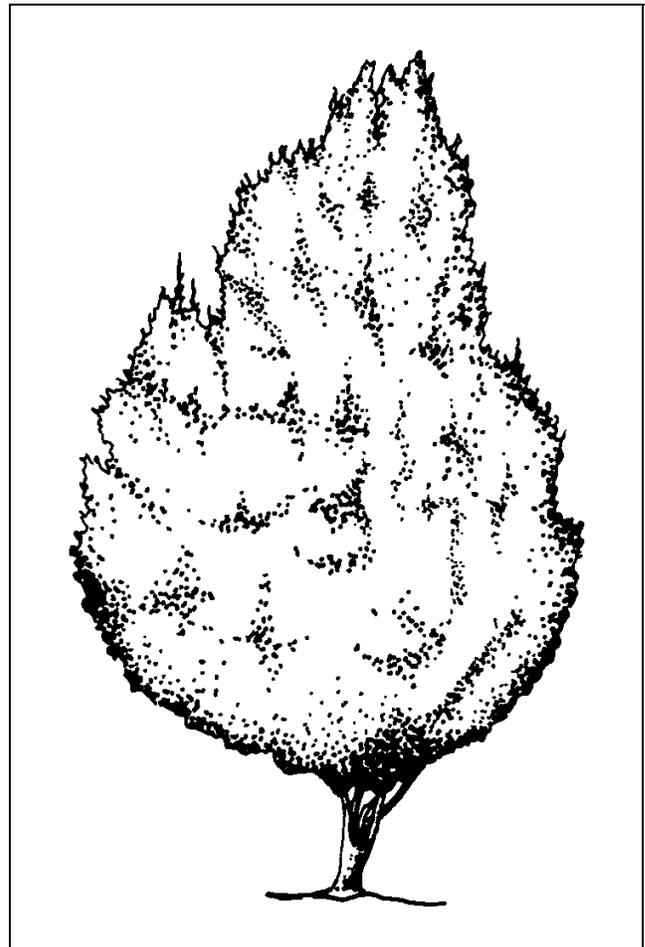


Figure 1. Middle-aged Columnar Sargent Cherry.

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: Bonsai; wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-515, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1994.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

for median strip plantings in the highway; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 25 to 35 feet

Spread: 15 to 20 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: columnar; upright; vase shape

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: medium

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval); obovate

Leaf venation: banchidodrome; pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: copper; red; yellow

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: pink

Flower characteristics: showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: < .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: black; purple; red

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be

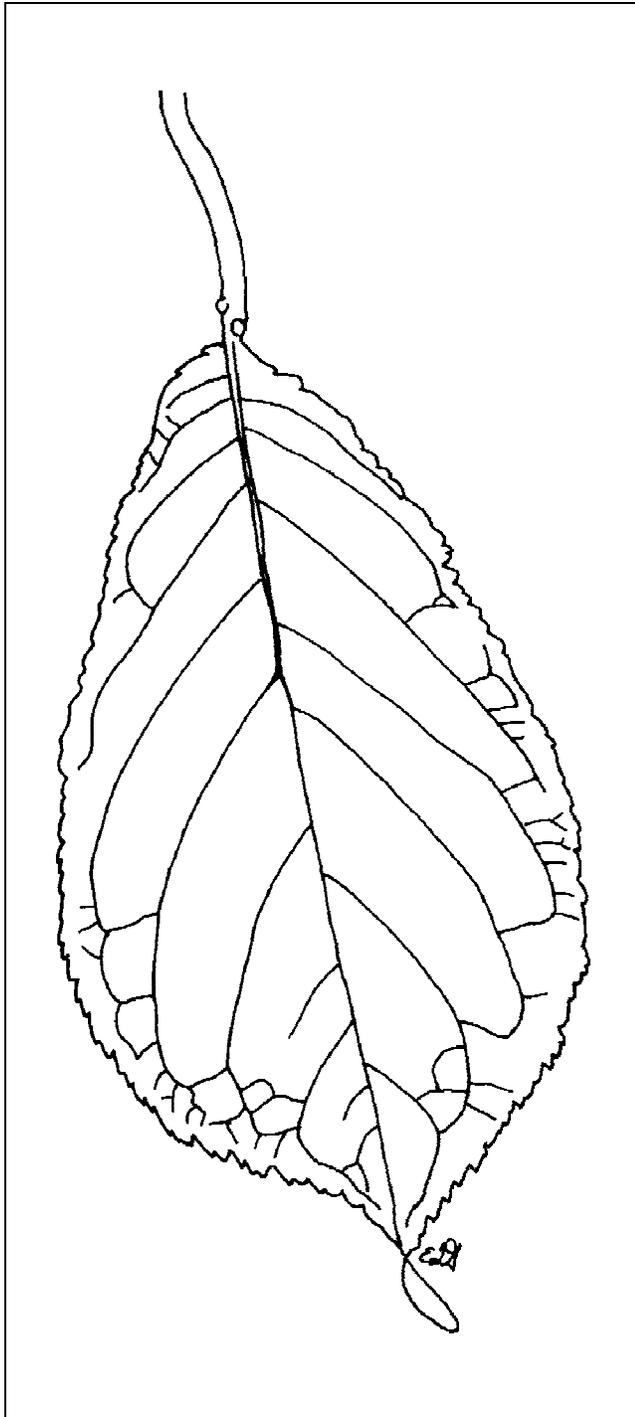


Figure 3. Foliage of Columnar Sargent Cherry.

trained to grow with a single trunk; 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; reddish

Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; 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: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Sargent Cherry works well as a street tree (probably the best of the cherries for street planting) in areas which require a narrow crowned tree. It can be planted along the entry road to a subdivision or commercial landscape on 15 to 20-foot-centers or in the tree lawn space between the curb and sidewalk. It is also very effective as a specimen in the lawn or landscape bed.

Sargent Cherry should be grown in full sun on very well-drained, acid soil. Although it grows moderately fast and can reach up to 60 feet tall in the wild, Sargent Cherry is relatively short-lived with a 20-year lifespan, but provides reliable service during this period. It requires little maintenance once established and is quite tolerant of drought and clay soil.

Propagation is by grafting or budding.

Pests and Diseases

It is bothered by tent caterpillars, aphids, borers, and scales.