

## *Cockspur Hawthorne*



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We have looked at two wonderful small ornamental trees in the past issues which exhibited excellent year -round visual qualities: the Eastern Redbud and the Amur Chokecherry. This month we will look at another multi-purpose small tree for that special place in your landscape. It is a member of the rose family (Rosaceae) like the Amur Chokecherry.

The Cockspur Hawthorne (*Crataegus crusgalli*) has been present in the U.S. since 1656 and was aptly called the thorn apple because of its miniature applelike fruits and 1 1/2 to 3-inch thorns. *Crataegus* is the classical Greek name for the Hawthorne and cockspur refers to its long thorns. It has been present in Minnesota, in small numbers, since early this century. Examples of this tree can be seen on old farm sites, in open forested areas, along roadsides and along the banks of streams. It is widely used by wildlife for cover and winter food. Its most unusual use is by the predator shrike who stores excess food (insects, small birds and mammals) on the thorns.

It can be grown as a large shrub or a small tree in the urban, suburban or rural landscape. It prefers well-drained, slightly acid soil and full sun. It is very tolerant of hot, dry sites, so it can be used as a living fence in open areas. It can also be used in landscape groupings or as a single specimen in a small area.

It grows to about 15 to 25 feet high and 25 feet wide. It has a dense, low-branched, broad, rounded, sometimes flat-topped crown. The leaves are shiny dark green and leathery. The fall color ranges from orange to scarlet. The May flowers are white and have a slightly disagreeable odor for seven to ten days. For this reason, you may not want to plant next to the main entry of the home. The fruit are 3/8 inch to 1/2 inch in diameter and turn deep red in late September and October. They tend to hang onto the tree into mid-winter unless the squirrels store them for the winter.

If this tree will be close to children's activities, you may want to plant a thorn less variety. They have the same attributes of the species except the thorns. It is generally maintenance-free and has few pests. The recent varieties will have some cedar Hawthorne rust and leaf miners, but it is not a major problem and does not require any special attention by the homeowner.

This is another excellent four season tree for your landscape. According to the forefather of the MN Landscape Arboretum, Dr. Leon Snyder, it "deserves to be planted more often".