

# Chokecherry



# Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*)

## General Description

This small suckering hardy tree or large shrub is native throughout North Dakota. Purple-leaved selections are popular landscape plants. Fruits commonly used for jellies and jams. The largest tree form in North Dakota is 41 feet tall with a canopy spread of 28 feet.

### Leaves and Buds

Bud Arrangement - Alternate.

Bud Color - Light brown.

Bud Size - Small, 1/16 to 3/16 inch.

Leaf Type and Shape - Simple, broadly elliptical.

Leaf Margins - Abruptly acuminate, broad-cuneate to rounded at base, and closely serrulate.

Leaf Surface - Glabrous, except axillary tufts of hair beneath.

Leaf Length - 1½ to 3 inches.

Leaf Width - 3/4 to 1½ inches.

Leaf Color - Dark green above, lighter green below; yellow fall color.

### Flowers and Fruits

Flower Type - Racemes, 3 to 6 inches long.

Flower Color - Creamy-white.

Fruit Type - Drupe, fleshy fruit with a stone in the center.

Fruit Color - Dark red to purple-black when mature.

### Form

Growth Habit - Oval to rounded, slender twigs.

Texture - Medium-fine, summer; medium, winter.

Crown Height - 12 to 25 feet.

Crown Width - 10 to 20 feet.

Bark Color - Gray-brown.

Root System - Shallow, suckering.

## Environmental Requirements

### Soils

Soil Texture - Adapted to a wide variety of soils.

Soil pH - 5.0 to 8.0.

Windbreak Suitability Group - 1, 1K, 3, 4, 4C, 5, 6D, 6G.

### Cold Hardiness

USDA Zone 2.

### Water

Moderate drought tolerance.

### Light

Shade tolerant, but needs full sun to produce a good fruit crop.

## Uses

### Conservation/Windbreaks

Tall shrub for farmstead and field windbreaks, riparian plantings and highway beautification.

### Wildlife

One of the most important plants for food and cover. Twigs and foliage are heavily browsed by deer.

### Agroforestry Products

Food - Fruit commonly used for jelly and wine.

Medicinal - Some *Prunus* species are used as an astringent, for coughs, colds, an antibiotic; for gout and in cancer research.

### Urban/Recreational

Very limited use due to its suckering habit. Useful in screen or mass plantings.

## Cultivated Varieties

Schubert (or Canada Red) Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana* 'Schubert' or 'Canada Red') - Cultivar released by the Oscar Will Nursery, Bismarck, North Dakota. Canada Red was originally grafted on Mayday tree rootstock to eliminate suckering, but is now largely seed or cutting propagated. Leaves turn to purple color as they harden-off in early summer.

## Related Species

American Plum (*Prunus americana*)

May Day Tree (*P. padus* var. *commutata*)

Mongolian Cherry (*P. fruticosa*)

Nanking Cherry (*P. tomentosa*)

Russian Almond (*P. tenella*)

Western Sandcherry (*P. besseyi*)

## Pests

Common diseases include X-disease, black knot, stem decay, shothole and Valsa canker. Common insect pest is prairie tent caterpillar. Deer commonly browse choke-cherry. Extracts of various *Prunus* species are toxic to various insect pests.