Western Sandcherry
Western Sandcherry
(Prunus besseyi)

**General Description**
A small, winter-hardy, relatively short-lived shrub native to the Northern Great Plains. Edible fruits which are dark purple to black. Purpleleaf Sandcherry, a hybrid, is a popular landscape shrub.

**Leaves and Buds**
Bud Arrangement - Alternate.
Bud Color - Brown.
Bud Size - 1/8 inch.
Leaf Type and Shape - Simple, oval-lanceolate.
Leaf Margins - Appressed-serrate.
Leaf Surface - Smooth, glabrous.
Leaf Length - 1 to 2 inches.
Leaf Width - 1/2 to 1 inch.
Leaf Color - Dark silvery-green to gray-green, lighter beneath; yellow fall color.

**Flowers and Fruits**
Flower Type - 2 to 4 per cluster.
Flower Color - White.
Fruit Type - Cherry-shaped fruit, globose.
Fruit Color - Dark purple to black when mature.

**Form**
Growth Habit - Open, spreading.
Texture - Medium, summer; medium, winter.
Crown Height - 3 to 6 feet.
Crown Width - 3 to 6 feet.
Bark Color - Gray-brown.
Root System - Medium in depth and spread.

**Environmental Requirements**

**Soils**
Soil Texture - Prefers loamy soils.
Soil pH - 5.0 to 7.5.
Windbreak Suitability Group - 1, 3, 5, 6D, 6G.

**Cold Hardiness**
USDA Zone 3.

**Water**
Fair drought tolerance.

**Light**
Full sun only.

**Uses**

**Conservation/Windbreaks**
Small to medium shrub for farmstead windbreaks.

**Wildlife**
Fruits are relished by many songbirds. Nesting cover for a few species of songbirds. Makes good loafing and roosting cover for song and game birds. Browsed by deer.

**Agroforestry Products**
Food - Fruits eaten fresh, dried, or processed as jellies and pies.
Medicinal - Prunus species have been used for coughs and colds, as an antibiotic and in cancer research.

**Urban/Recreational**
Used in screen, hedge, or border plantings, occasionally.

**Cultivated Varieties**
Hanson Bush Cherry (Prunus besseyi ‘Hanson’)
Purpleleaf Sandcherry (P. x cistena)

**Related Species**
American Plum (Prunus americana)
Chokecherry (P. virginiana)
Mongolian Cherry (P. fruticosa)
Nanking Cherry (P. tomentosa)

**Pests**
Common diseases include Taphrina leaf curl, black knot, and fireblight. Extracts of Prunus species repel or are toxic to various insect pests.