

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.