

Hawthorn



Linden



Mountain Ash



Photos by Tara Costanzo

Choosing flowering trees and shrubs for a Wyoming landscape



Buckeye



Chokecherry



Crabapple

In Wyoming’s harsh climate, plant selection is often based on utility rather than aesthetics.

For instance, when building a wind buffer, homeowners typically plant trees and shrubs that retain their leaves year-round, rather than those that drop their leaves each fall.

But it’s not *always* about utility. Many homeowners also choose plants based on color palette, including leaf, flower, and fruit color, or on pollinator friendliness.

Understanding plant anatomy

The three main components of a tree or shrub are the **roots, trunk and stems**, and the **leaves**. For a short amount of time during the growing period, the reproductive parts of trees and shrubs—also known as flowers—are present as well!

Flowers facilitate reproduction to perpetuate the life of the species. Ultimately, the biological purpose of a flower is to create seeds to make more trees and shrubs.

There are two types of flowers: perfect or imperfect (also known as complete or incomplete). A perfect flower has all the components to reproduce in one flower, while imperfect flowers require two flowers to reproduce, one with the pollen-producing structure and one with the ovary. Most of the trees listed below have perfect flowers, with the exception of some *Prunus* species.

Dioecious plants have imperfect flowers and produce

pollen or seeds and fruits for future plant generations. Examples of dioecious trees, where one tree only has flowers with ovaries and another tree only has flowers with anthers, include Kentucky coffeetree and cottonwoods.

Attracting pollinators

Some flowers have evolved special characteristics for specific pollinators, such as colors and shapes that attract birds and insects. Flowers adapted for pollinators, like those found on the leadplant or rabbitbrush, are often bell- or tube-shaped.

Some trees, including many conifers, are wind pollinated and produce a massive volume of pollen. Pollinators may still visit wind-pollinated plants, but these pollen sources usually do not provide as great a reward as those that offer nectar.

Trees and shrubs can also benefit pollinators by creating a windbreak, which provides a better environment for foraging.

Selecting varieties

When selecting plants, one consideration is selecting a plant variety with a hardiness that is suitable for your area. Wyoming has a hardiness zone range of 3a–5b depending on location. Some maps indicate hardiness zones as low as Zone 2, but these areas are very remote—likely not where you are going to be intentionally planting.

Check with your local UW Extension or conservation district office for assistance in determining the hardiness zone for your area and identifying plant varieties that are likely to establish successfully and meet your long-term landscaping goals.

Flowering trees

| Scientific Name | Common Name | Bloom | Bloom Color |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------|-------------|
| <i>Aesculus glabra</i> | Ohio buckeye | March–May | |
| <i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i> | horsechestnut | April–June | |
| <i>Catalpa speciosa</i> | northern/western catalpa | June–July | |
| <i>Crataegus spp.</i> | hawthorn | May | |
| <i>Koelreuteria paniculata</i> | goldenrain tree | June–July | |
| <i>Malus spp.</i> | crabapple | April–May | |
| <i>Prunus padus</i> | birdcherry | March–June | |
| <i>Prunus virginiana melanocarpa</i> | chokecherry | May–June | |
| <i>Prunus x cistena</i> | purple leaf plum | April | |
| <i>Pyrus calleryana</i> | ornamental pear | April–May | |
| <i>Robinia neomexicana</i> | New Mexico locust | May–June | |
| <i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i> | black locust | May–June | |
| <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i> | mountain ash | May | |
| <i>Tilia americana</i> | American linden | May–July | |
| <i>Tilia cordata</i> | littleleaf linden | June–July | |
| <i>Tilia tomentosa</i> | silver linden | June–July | |

Recommendations

When choosing plant materials, don't limit yourself to a certain color palette. Try adding pops of color throughout your design.

Keep in mind that some trees and shrubs flower before they leaf out (crabapples, for example), while others flower later in the season after the leaves have already emerged (lindens and buckeyes). Some have showy flowers that are

quite noticeable and large; others produce flowers that are dainty and small, or not very noticeable at all.

As shown in the charts, trees have much shorter bloom times than many of the shrubs; take this into consideration when designing your landscape. If you want trees and shrubs to bloom continuously throughout the warmer months, consider choosing plants that overlap in bloom times.

Cultivating flowering plants that bloom at different times benefits pollinators and adds seasonal and sensory interest. As with a painting, choosing a variety of colors and textures keeps viewers engaged with your landscape.

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Flowering shrubs

| Scientific Name | Common Name | Month | Bloom Color |
|--|--|------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i> | serviceberry | April–May | |
| <i>Amorpha canescens</i> | lead plant | June–July | purple |
| <i>Aronia melanocarpa</i> | black chokeberry | May–June | |
| <i>Berberis thunbergii</i> | barberry | April–May | yellow |
| <i>Buddleia</i> sp. | butterfly bush | June–September | purple |
| <i>Caragana</i> spp. | peashrub | May–June | yellow |
| <i>Caryopteris x clandonensis</i> | blue mist spirea | July–September | purple |
| <i>Ceanothus fendleri</i> | mountain sweet | June–July | light blue |
| <i>Chrysothamnus nauseosus</i> | rabbitbrush | August–September | yellow |
| <i>Daphne burkwoodii</i> | daphne | February–March | pink |
| <i>Fallugia paradoxa</i> | Apache plume | May–October | |
| <i>Forsythia lintermedia</i> | forsythia | March–April | yellow, pink |
| <i>Hamamelis virginiana</i> | witchhazel | October–December | yellow, pink |
| <i>Hibiscus syriacus</i> | Rose of Sharon | June–October | pink, red, purple, pink |
| <i>Holodiscus dumosus</i> | rock spirea | June | |
| <i>Hydrangea arborescens</i> | hydrangea | July–September | |
| <i>Jamesia americana</i> | waxflower | May–June | |
| <i>Kolkwitzia amabilis</i> | beautybush | May–June | |
| <i>Krascheninnikovia lanata (Ceratooides lanata)</i> | winter fat | March–June | |
| <i>Lonicera</i> spp. | honeysuckle | March–April | pink |
| <i>Perovskia atriplicifolia</i> | Russian sage | July–August | purple |
| <i>Philadelphus coronarius, P. lewisii</i> | mock orange | May–June | |
| <i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i> | ninebark | May–August | |
| <i>Potentilla fruticosa</i> | cinquefoil | June–August | yellow, pink, pink |
| <i>Prunus</i> spp. | sand cherry, flowering almond | March–May | pink, pink |
| <i>Pyracantha coccinea</i> | firethorn | April–May | |
| <i>Ribes alpinum, R. odoratum, R. uva-crispa, R. cereum, R. aureum</i> | Currant: alpine, clove, gooseberry, wax, golden | March–June | yellow, pink |
| <i>Rosa</i> spp. | roses | May–July | pink |
| <i>Sambucus canadensis</i> | elderberry | June–July | |
| <i>Shepherdia argentea</i> | buffaloberry | April–May | yellow |
| <i>Spirea x bumalda, S. thunbergii, S. x vanhouttei</i> | Spirea: Bumald, Thunberg, Vanhoutte | May–Sept | pink, pink, pink |
| <i>Symphoricarpos</i> spp. | snowberry, coralberry | May–June | pink, pink |
| <i>Syringa</i> spp. | lilac | May–August | purple, pink, purple |
| <i>Viburnum carlesii, V. lantana, V. opulus, V. x rhytido phylloides</i> | Viburnum: Korean spice, wayfaring tree, cranberry, 'Allegheny' | May–June | |