

Juneberries/Serviceberries

The Serviceberry (*Amelanchier*), also known as juneberry, saskatoon, mespilus, sarvis, shad-blossom and shadbush, is a genus of about 25 species of small deciduous trees and large shrubs in the family Rosaceae. In some areas an *Amelanchier* species is known as the currant-tree, but it is unrelated to currants (of genus *Ribes*). The genus has a wide distribution in the temperate Northern Hemisphere, with the majority of the species in North America and single species in Europe and Asia.

The name serviceberry comes from the similarity of the fruit to the related European Service Tree, *Sorbus domestica*, a name derived from the Latin name for the tree *sorbus*, recorded by Pliny the Elder. A widespread folk etymology states that plant's flowering time signaled to early American pioneers that the ground had thawed enough in spring for the burial of the winter's dead. The taxonomic name *Amelanchier* is derived from the French name *amélanchier* (*amélanche*) of the European serviceberry. The city name of Saskatoon in Saskatchewan comes from a Cree Indian noun *misâskwatômina* (*misâskwatômina*, *misaaskwatoomina*) for saskatoon berries.

The leaves are alternate, entire or finely serrate, oval, 2-10 cm long and 1-4 cm broad, green, often turning brilliant orange or red in the fall. The flowers are white, 2-4 cm diameter, with five petals, and borne in terminal racemes of 5-25. The flowers appear in early spring, "when the shad run" according to tradition (leading to names such as "shadbush"). The fruit is a small pome, 1-2 cm diameter, blue-black, edible and often sweet, maturing in summer (whence the name 'juneberry').

Serviceberries are preferred browse for deer and rabbits, and heavy browsing pressure can suppress natural regeneration. Caterpillars of Lepidoptera such as Brimstone Moth, Brown-tail, *Bucculatrix pomifoliella*, Grey Dagger, Gypsy moth, Mottled Umber, Rough Prominent, The Satellite, Winter Moth, *Limenitis arthemis* and other herbivorous insects also have a taste for serviceberry. Many insects and diseases that attack orchard trees also affect this genus, in particular trunk borers and *Gymnosporangium* rust. In years when late flowers overlap those of wild roses and brambles, bees may spread bacterial fireblight.

JUNEBERRY/SERVICE BERRY QUICK GUIDE

Latin Name

Amelanchier alnifolia

Type

Tree/Shrub

Site and Soil

Sunny (part shade is OK).
Soil well drained, well-dug and composted before planting.

Plant to Harvest Time

2 years

How Many?

2kg (4.5lbs) per plant



Where To Grow Your Juneberry/Serviceberry Shrub

Serviceberries are very hardy (to -20) and, in fact, need a winter chill to produce Spring flowers. They need little pampering and will grow in both full sun and partial

shade. They like a moist soil that drains well, but as you can see in the Spring, they tolerate our clay soils.

When and How To Plant Juneberries/Serviceberries

When you plant a serviceberry, make sure the area where the main trunk meets the root ball (called the root flare) is just above the soil line. The hole needs to be three to five times wider than the root ball so that it can easily spread its roots. The roots are not invasive; therefore, you can plant things around them. The light shade provided by serviceberry trees won't overshadow other plantings.

Pruning

Serviceberry plants normally do not need to be pruned for the first three years. Remove blossoms that appear in the year of planting and second year after planting to stimulate vigorous growth.

It is important to know the anatomy of a serviceberry bush before attempting to prune (Figure 2). During the fourth year, the dormant plants should be pruned in mid-March. At this time, remove dead and weak branches and thin, terminal wood with small buds. Prune interior crossing branches to admit light to the center of the plant.

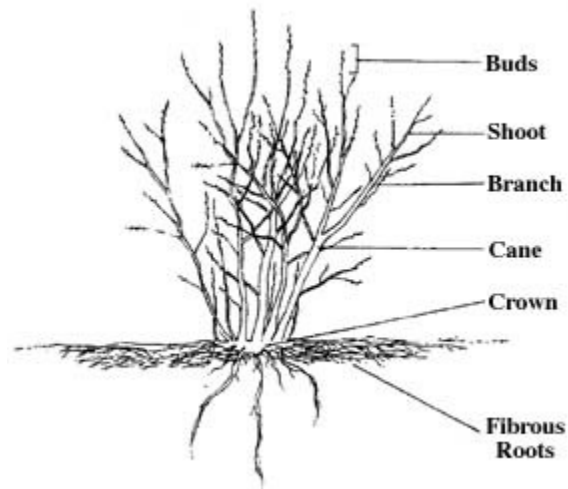


Figure 2. Diagram of a serviceberry bush.

In subsequent years, thin out older branches to force new growth. Tall-growing branches can be headed back and thin branches removed. Flower buds of serviceberry bush are produced on tips and down the second year old shoots