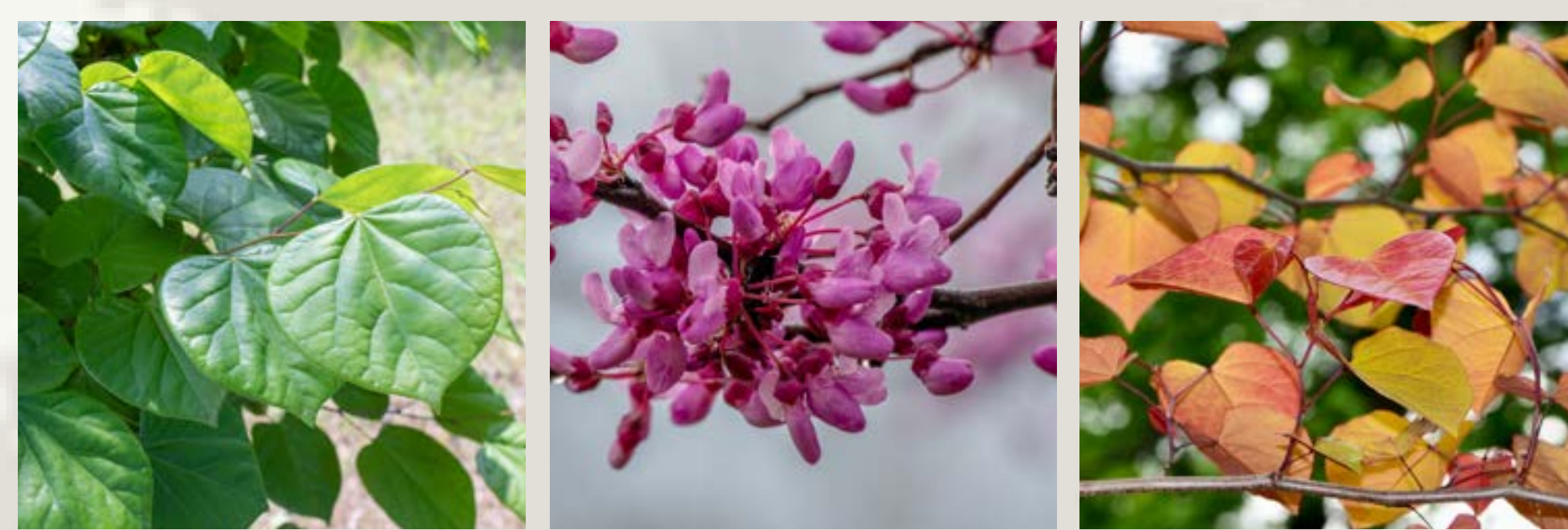


Eastern Redbud *Cercis canadensis*



Native Range

Eastern and Southern North America

Description

The eastern redbuds are one of the very first trees to bloom in spring and they put on quite a show. The tree produces beautiful magenta blossoms along its twigs, branches, and trunk before it leafs out. The heart-shaped leaves look beautiful after the blossoms fade—they change color from reddish brown in the spring to green in summer and yellow in the fall. The eastern redbud tree is a member of the *Fabaceae* or bean family, as it has pea-like buds, flowers, and seed pods.

Pollination

The redbud's early flowers provide food for pollinators, in particular, long-tongued bees, and the eastern redbud is pollinated by many types of bees.

Environmental Benefits

The redbud is a favored native ornamental tree that provides significant environmental benefits. The leaves provide food for various caterpillars, which in turn nourish hungry birds.

Environmental Concerns

Redbuds thrive in different varieties all around the world and are not threatened. Climate change allows them to grow farther north than their original range.

History

Redbuds are sometimes known as Judas trees because, according to lore, Judas Iscariot hanged himself from a tree related to the redbud. Indigenous Peoples ate the redbud flowers both raw and cooked. In Appalachia, the green twigs are used to season wild game, such as venison, and the tree is called the spicewood tree.

Size

Redbud trees have a quick growth rate, but stay relatively small. At maturity the redbud reaches a height of 20' to 30' with a spread of 26' to 33'. The tree may be pruned to grow as a shrub.

Ease of Tree Care

Redbuds thrive in sun or part shade at the edge of a forest and are tolerant of clay soil. Once established, redbud trees are very drought tolerant. Despite their easy-going nature, redbuds don't tolerate root disturbance. Make sure to choose the proper site; after establishment redbud trees don't like transplanting. Prune to avoid irregular branching and to keep their structure strong. Healthy trees with good structure and airflow suffer less from fungal attacks, such as leaf spot, verticillium wilt, and dieback.

Where to Plant

Plant redbuds in naturalized, woodland areas, as well as in a shrub border or as a specimen tree. They can be propagated by collecting and planting seeds from a neighborhood tree or rogue seedling—they are prolific self-sowers.