



CHRISTENSEN'S PLANT CENTER

Wholesale Supplier To Landscape Professionals

Are Crabapples out of style?

When I first started in the re-wholesale nursery business back in 1986 it seemed that every other customer leaving the nursery had a crabapple loaded on their truck. Now, except for commercial projects we see a significant reduction in the number sold for residential jobs. Why is that?

I think part of the reason is that people are switching to the more dwarf varieties such as Coralburst® and Lollipop®. They are more in scale with a residential landscape and don't require as much maintenance. Many still reach 12'x12' and most homeowners either don't know or care to prune them properly. Maybe it's a good thing for our businesses. Pruning or removal and re-landscaping are income generating features.



We should not give up on the standard-sized flowering crabs. Yes, the older varieties have their flaws, but they have their place in the complete landscape. Year-round interest of flowers, form, fall color and fruit make them a great addition. They are very hardy and other than a late spring frost, cold weather is not an issue. I don't think I have ever seen anyone replacing a crab due to winter kill. It is usually due to poor care or mechanical injury – mowers or vehicles.

All the newer varieties are disease resistant and proven performers. One that comes to mind is the Royal Raindrops®. A pink flowering, dark-leaf variety that retains it's foliage and rich foliage color all season, unlike 'Royalty', which can be completely defoliated by mid-August. The persistent fruit has aesthetic value and feeds a number of migratory birds in late fall. Nothing says spring like a crabapple in full bloom! There is no perfect tree. Don't give up on flowering crabs. Allow for plenty of space, site in full sun, and they will give decades of enjoyment.



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