

January Native U.S. Flower of the Month

Allegheny serviceberry

(*Amelanchier laevis* Wieg.)



This serviceberry is a multiple-trunked tree or shrub, 15-25 ft. tall, with dense, fine-textured branching. White flowers occur in terminal clusters before the leaves appear and are followed by summer berries turning from red to purple or nearly black. Blue-green summer foliage can become orange or red in fall. The bark is smooth and slate-gray with white, longitudinal stripes.

Very easy to grow and provides year-round interest. Berries are edible and juicier than those of the similar *A. arborea*. Sensitive to drought. Serviceberries are subject to many disease and insect problems, but damage from these problems is usually cosmetic rather than life threatening. The sweet, juicy fruits are edible and rich in iron and copper. (Kershaw)

Native peoples dried the small pomes like raisins or mashed and dried them in cakes. Often the dried fruits were mixed with meat and fat to form pemmican, a light-weight, high-energy food that could support winter travelers for long periods if the diet was supplemented with vitamin C to prevent scurvy.

Also see: <http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=amla>

<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/gardens-gardening/your-garden/plant-finder/plant-details/kc/b250/amelanchier-laevis.aspx>