

It's Cherry Blossom Time in the Miami Valley

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Published April 1, 2017

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Spring is finally hitting us in the face with the beautiful spring colors that we have been anxiously awaiting. Pink, white, yellow, and purple colored-flowers are everywhere.

The most prominent trees in bloom right now are the cherries, which will be followed by the magnolias.

I am heading to Washington DC this weekend and unfortunately from what I am hearing, I will be missing the peak cherry blossoms due to the crazy recent weather!

However, there are plenty of ornamental cherry trees in the Miami Valley to enjoy.

Cherries are in the genus *Prunus* with more than 400 species in this genus. The genus also includes peaches, plums, apricots and almonds and they are all in the rose family.

The most familiar cherry in Washington, D.C. are the Yoshino (*P. xye-doensis*) cherries found around the tidal basin. The blooms are faintly pink to white and fragrant. Note: the "x" in the species name refers to the fact that this is a hybrid of two parents.

Yoshino is also one of the earliest blooming flowering cherry trees in our area. The most common cultivar that we find of the Yoshino cherry is 'Snow Fountains' which has white flowers with a weeping habit.

The Japanese flowering cherry (*P. serrulata*) is also quite common in our area. The flowers vary widely and are whites and pink, singles and doubles, depending on the cultivar.

An extremely popular cultivar is 'Kwanzan' which has beautiful double pink flowers that are almost the size of a golf ball. It is also one of the hardiest of the double types.

The weeping Higan cherry or *P. subhirtella pendula* can be found all around the Miami Valley. The white flowers are showing up now on a large weeping tree.

Unfortunately, this tree was hit pretty hard by the freeze of 2014. I am still seeing remnants of the cold damage on some trees that either haven't been pruned or are still showing signs of dieback.

Cherries are also well-known for their beautiful reddish-colored smooth bark. However, one of the later-season cherries, *P. serotina* or black cherry, has a black bark that flakes off like a bunch of potato chips.

Black cherries can grow to around 50-60' tall. They have black fruits in clusters that ripen in the summer and birds love them. They are also easily spread around by the birds with lots of seedlings showing up.

Given all of the beautiful colors and blooms that are available, cherries are nice landscape plants. However, when you purchase a cherry realize that most of them are short-lived, some lasting around 15-20 years.

On the other hand, I don't mind enjoying the cherry blossoms for 15 years!

They also have a few pest problems so be sure to keep them healthy to prevent borer infestations.



'Kwanzan'
Flowering Cherry



Snow Fountains
flowering cherry