

Pyrus calleryana

Callery Pear

True *Pyrus calleryana* is a thorny, coarse, irregular tree of which the only redeeming characteristic is the early spring white flowers, but even they are mildly disagreeable in their odor. The true species is generally used as an understock for budding the more desirable cultivars, the tree's main representatives in the landscape. The species was used as breeding stock in an attempt to incorporate fireblight resistance into *P. communis*, Common Pear; this experiment did not work, but gardeners have benefited from the ornamental attributes of the resulting cultivars. The most notable cultural aspect of *P. calleryana* is its tremendous tolerance of heat, drought, and compacted soils. Zones 5 to 8(9). Korea, China.

Cultivars and Varieties. 'Aristocrat' is a pyramidal to broad-pyramidal form, with coarse, horizontal branches. The lustrous dark green, wavy margined leaves turn persimmon-orange in fall. The white flowers are not as profuse as those of 'Bradford', but this cultivar is more structurally sound. Better suited to the North; fireblight has been problematic in the South. Grows 40 ft. high, 20 to 25 ft. wide.

'Bradford', introduced in the early 1960s, is as common as mud in landscapes across the United States. It is densely branched and foliated, broad-conical in habit in youth and maturity. A profusion of white flowers appear in April, and the leathery, 1½- to 3-in.-long and wide, dark green leaves turn fluorescent orange and red in fall. Despite all its desirable attributes, however, 'Bradford' suffers from a fatal genetic flaw that causes it to self-destruct, literally falling apart with time—the many branches will cause the tree to split in half after 10 to 15 years. For short-term use, it is acceptable, but to plant entire streets with this cultivar is playing biological Russian roulette. Trees that survived 20 years were 50 ft. high and 40 ft. wide. 'Bradford' is highly resistant to fireblight.

'Capital' has an upright columnar habit like that of *Populus nigra* 'Italica', Lombardy Poplar. It bears lustrous dark green leaves. Probably suitable only for northern states; fireblight has been a tremendous problem in the South. Grows 32 ft. high and 8 ft. wide in 15 years.

'Chanticleer' (also 'Select', 'Cleveland Select', or 'Stone Hill') is an upright-pyramidal form that, unlike some of the other cultivars, has not shown the propensity to break apart with age. It flowers heavily, but its reddish purple fall color does not measure up to that of 'Bradford'. Displays good fireblight resistance. Grows 35 ft. high and 16 ft. wide in 15 years.



Pyrus calleryana, Callery Pear



Pyrus calleryana 'Aristocrat' fall color

'Redspire' originated as a seedling of 'Bradford', but its pyramidal outline lacks the inherent stiffness of that of its parent. Flowers are less profuse, and fall color is yellow-orange to red. Fireblight has been devastating in the South, but I have not noticed the problem in the North.

'Whitehouse', intermediate between 'Capital' and 'Bradford' in growth habit, has never proven popular because of its susceptibility to leaf spot. It is tightly pyramidal. Not as heavy flowering as 'Bradford'. Grows 35 ft. high and 14 ft. wide after 14 years.



Pyrus calleryana 'Bradford' fall color



Pyrus calleryana 'Bradford' flowers



Pyrus calleryana 'Bradford' fruit

