Flowering Cherries Brighten Winter Landscape
Linda H. Yates
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In late January and into February a burst of dark pink blossoms will cover leafless branches of trees around Tallahassee. The unexpected beauty amazes passers-by. “What are those trees?” is the oft repeated question. Get acquainted with *Prunus campanulata*, a species of flowering cherries that came to this country from the Orient, bringing with it the elegant decorative quality seen in Japanese and Chinese art. The Prunus genus includes hundreds of varieties, cultivars and hybrids, of cherry, apricot, plum, peach and others.

Of some 120 species of Oriental cherries, 50 exist in the United States, spread over various agricultural hardiness and heat zones.

The one especially suited to Tallahassee’s climate and soil conditions is *Prunus campanulata*, whose common name is Taiwan cherry. Not knowing its real name, many Tallahasseeans, when given a passalong rooting of the tree, call it by its source. The Sixth Avenue cherry, Miss Fanny’s cherry, and similar original names are all the Taiwan cherry.

The Taiwan cherry grows to 20 to 25 feet and spreads nearly as wide as it matures. Adapted to the Southeast to South Carolina, it is a nice shade tree or lawn specimen and should be planted in full sun for the best blooms. Single, drooping rose flowers appear in early January as a rule and last for about ten days. Tiny fruits follow, which produce seedlings that must be weeded out or passed along to gardening friends. Lustrous dark green leaves provide shade all summer and turn to bronze-red in the fall.

Local nurseries are helping introduce several other flowering cherries to the area. Okami is also adaptable here, growing to 20 to 30 feet, and producing light pink flowers. *Prunus serrulata* ‘Snow Goose’ has a slight curve to its trunk and weeping branches of white flowers. Suited to Zones 5 to 9, it too should be grown in full sun in sandy loam. Its fall foliage is yellow to orange and it has a coppery red, glossy, peeling bark.

Another popular cultivar of the *serrulata* species is one called ‘Kwanzan’ which has double pink flowers and reaches a height of 20 feet.

Although it has been tried here, the cherry tree planted along Washington’s Tidal Basin, *Prunus yedoensis* or Yoshino cherry does not thrive in this climate. Washington, D.C. and Macon, GA, and probably other cities, have cherry festivals to celebrate their flowering abundance. As they catch on in Tallahassee, maybe there will be a cherry festival in this city’s future too.

For more information about gardening in our area, visit the website of University of Florida’s IFAS Extension in Leon County, [http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu](http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu). There you will find links to a wealth of gardening information, including publications at University of Florida, University of Georgia, and Auburn University.

*Linda H. Yates is a Master Gardener volunteer and a member of the University of Florida IFAS Leon County Extension Advisory Committee.*

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