

Cotoneaster divaricatus - Spreading Cotoneaster (*Rosaceae*)

Cotoneaster divaricatus is a horizontally spreading shrub or hedge. Spreading Cotoneaster branches to the ground, has small glossy dark green leaves, red autumn fruits, vibrant mixed autumn color, and is virtually absent of the disease and pest problems that plague some Cotoneasters.

FEATURES

Form

- medium-sized ornamental shrub
- maturing at about 7' tall x 8' wide
- upright columnar growth habit in youth, but quickly becoming horizontal and spreading with age, with the



outer stems unbranched for 1-3' and held horizontally to slightly downswept

- medium growth rate

Culture

- full sun to partial shade
- prefers moist, well-drained soils in full sun but is very adaptable and urban tolerant, including adaptability to poor soils, various soil pHs, drought, pruning, moderate salt spray, and some soil compaction
- propagated by rooted stem cuttings or seeds
- few disease and pest problems; the problems that most Cotoneasters experience (fireblight, spider mites, and webworm) are rare in this species
- mulch thoroughly underneath the shrub canopy to prevent hard-to-access tall weeds from climbing through the stems
- moderately available, primarily in container form

Foliage

- dark glossy green leaves are about 1" long and are alternate, elliptical, with flattened margins (some Cotoneasters have rolled or wavy leaf margins) and without impressed leaf veins
- autumn color is a nice mixture of green, yellow, orange, red, and burgundy, slowly becoming deciduous



Flowers

- pink buds open to small white-pink flowers that are held tightly against the stems, blossoming in late May and early June
- the many solitary and clustered small flowers are effective when a large, mature, unpruned plant is in full flower

Fruits

- 0.25" long red oval fruits mature in Sept. and Oct.

and abscise by early winter

- the ornamental effect is limited as the fruits become lost in the mixed-colored, slow-to-abscise autumn foliage, but is very attractive when viewed up-close

Twigs

- red-purple (although not ornamental) with a persistent pubescence on the tips of the winter stems, and a waxy coating that flakes off with age further down the stems; buds are very small

Trunk

- not applicable

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Function

- informal or formal hedge, entranceway, group planting, foundation, specimen, or border shrub effective when unpruned and used with distinctly vertical plants for a stark contrast in growth directions
- also good with a background of evergreens (red berries and mixed-color autumn foliage contrast well against the greenery)

Texture

- fine texture in foliage and medium texture when bare
- open density in foliage and when bare

Assets

- lustrous dark green summer foliage
- horizontal stems with maturity
- branching to the ground (excellent when used as a hedge)

Liabilities

- garbage and dead leaf collector (due to low branching)
- may eventually spread horizontally beyond its intended boundaries if kept as an informal hedge or unpruned shrub

Habitat

- Zones 5 to 7
- Native to China

SELECTIONS

Alternates

- other horizontally spreading deciduous shrubs or hedges (*Euonymus alatus* 'Compactus', *Ligustrum obtusifolium* var. *regelianum*, *Viburnum plicatum* var. *tomentosum* 'Shasta', etc.)

Cultivars – Variants – Related species

- the species form is the only form available; however, 2 Cotoneasters that were once commonly in cultivation (yet today are hard to obtain) are listed below, noting differences with Spreading Cotoneaster:

Cotoneaster lucidus - Hedge Cotoneaster - leaves twice as large but just as glossy, with an even more outstanding autumn color mix; growth habit a little more upright, and fruits turn from red to purple-black at maturity

Cotoneaster zabelii - Cherryberry Cotoneaster - leaves twice as large and are distinctly gray-green due to their dense pubescence (and therefore are not glossy); fruits are dull red but in pendulous clusters, hanging from 2" long peduncles and pedicels from the stems in autumn