

Crataegus crusgalli - Cocksaur Hawthorn (*Rosaceae*)

Crataegus crus-galli is a small tree with horizontal, spreading branches and a flat-topped shape at maturity. Cocksaur Hawthorn is known for its showy white inflorescences, brick-red fruits, glossy summer and vibrant, multi-colored autumn foliage, and bold winter texture.

FEATURES

Form

-small ornamental tree



-maturing at about 15' tall x 20' wide
-horizontal spreading growth habit, becoming flat-topped with age
-slow growth rate in the vertical dimension, but medium growth rate in the horizontal direction

Culture

-full sun to partial sun
-very urban tolerant, including adaptability to poor soils, various soil pHs, compacted soils, drought, heat, and winter salt spray
-propagated by seeds or by stem cuttings grafted onto seedling rootstock
-there are several potential pests (including leaf blotch miner) and diseases (especially rusts, with the stereotype being cedar hawthorn rust that affects the fruit, foliage, and stems)
-moderately available (for thornless cultivar)

Foliage

-dark glossy to waxy green, about 3" long, alternate, short-petioled, strongly obovate with a long cuneate base (i.e., spatulate), with fine marginal serrations on the upper widened portion of the leaf blade
-leaves are held distinctly upright above the stem, and in a V-shaped staggered arrangement if one looks down the axis of the stem
-autumn color is often a showy multi-colored array of red, purple, orange, and yellow waxy leaves on the tree at the same time, coloring in late Oct. and early Nov.



Flowers

-white 2" wide inflorescences blanket the tree in late May, effective for 1-2 weeks and malodorous

Fruits

-green turning to orange by Sept., then to brick red in Nov. and often persistent into Jan. or later
-clusters of pendulous 0.5" round fruits make this a very attractive ornamental tree in early winter (similar to some Crabapples [*Malus*])
-readily eaten by birds and squirrels

Twigs

-red-brown stems with small buds, with the older

stems and branches becoming gray
-thorns are very prominent, to 2" long, slightly curved, downturned on the lower half of the stems and very prominent (hence the common name of Cocksaur Hawthorn, in resembling a rooster's or "cock's" curved spur)

-very densely twiggy and thorny, especially with age
-thornless cultivars are now the norm in the trade

Trunk

-often multi-trunked and armed on the trunk with prominently branched thorns that are a potential liability (except for thornless forms)
-often limbed up with age, as branching is naturally low for this relatively short and horizontally branching tree

USAGE

Function

-focal point, specimen, street, deciduous screen, tall barrier hedge, seasonal accent, entranceway, group planting, or wildlife attraction tree

Texture

-medium texture in foliage but bold when bare
-thick density when in foliage and when bare

Assets

-very urban tolerant
-winter salt spray tolerant
-four-season accent ornamental tree
-horizontally spreading growth habit and bold texture is very distinctive and architecturally useful in the landscape, especially in winter
-showy white inflorescence in mid-spring
-glossy dark green summer foliage turns to a multi-colored array of color in autumn
-crabapple-like brick red fruits mature in late summer and are retained into early winter
-fruits, dense branches, and prominent thorns (in the species form) attract wildlife for food and refuge

Liabilities

-malodorous inflorescences
-thorns can be a liability
-fruit litter in winter is a potential liability in heavy pedestrian traffic areas
-several significant pests and diseases, some strictly cosmetic in effect, while others may lead to a decline in the overall vigor of the tree

Habitat

-Zones 3 to 7
-Native to the Northern and Midwestern U.S. and Southern Canada

SELECTIONS

Alternates

-small trees with good multi-season effect (*Acer palmatum*, *Amelanchier*, *Cornus florida*, *Malus*, etc.)
-trees or large shrubs serving as wildlife food sources and refuges (*Crataegus phaenopyrum*, *Lonicera tatarica*, *Viburnum prunifolium*, etc.)

Cultivars – Variants – Related species

[clump (multi-stemmed) or tree (single leader) forms]

-*Crataegus crus-galli* var. *inermis* Crusader™

('Cruzam') - Crusader Thornless Cocksaur

Hawthorn: a cultivar of a variety that is completely thornless on the trunks and branches, very useful in urban areas as a specimen, group planting, or small street tree, maturing at 15' x 15', without the liability of thorn damage to humans, and resistant to rust on the fruits