

Prunus subhirtella var. *pendula* - Weeping Higan Cherry

(Rosaceae)

Prunus subhirtella var. *pendula* is a medium-sized tree noted for its showy early spring blooms, rapid growth, and strongly weeping habit to the ground. The upper arching branches of Weeping Higan Cherry become mounding with age.

FEATURES

Form



- medium-sized ornamental tree
- maturing at up to 40' tall x 25' wide (but often smaller), and grafted onto a standard
- pendulous oval growth habit in youth, becoming a pendulous mounding

growth habit with maturity (like a single- or multitiered umbrella)

-medium growth rate for its arching vertical growth, but a rapid growth rate for its many weeping stems

Culture

- full sun to partial sun
- adaptable to poor soils, compacted soils, dry soils, and heat
- propagated primarily by rooted stem cuttings, and rarely by seed
- several potential disease problems (including trunk cankers) and several potential pest problems (including trunk borers and Japanese beetles), plus potential frost cracks on the trunk in winter
- commonly available in container or B&B
- remove all suckers and watersprouts that occur below the graft union, as these will be vertical (rather than weeping) in their growth habit and will destroy the character of the tree

Foliage

- medium to dark green with dull shiny upper surfaces, alternate, ovate to elliptical, singly or doubly serrated, with an acuminate apex
- autumn color is a mixture of green, yellowish green, and yellow, and is ornamentally insignificant

Flowers

- single- or double-flowering, light-pink pendulous clusters of flowers occur on the weeping branches in late Mar. or early Apr. before the leaves emerge, effective for 1 week

Fruit

- fruits are small and glossy black, but are sparse, ornamentally insignificant, hidden by the foliage, and seldom noticed

Twigs

- among ornamental tree members of the Rose Family, Weeping Higan Cherry is one of the few that has very few spur shoots, as most flowers occur from buds along the slender, straight, relatively unbranched weeping twigs

Trunk

- single-trunked, obtained from grafting the weeping cultivar 'Pendula' onto the upright species standard,

- typically at 5-6' above the ground
- bronze-copper in color and lenticled, becoming gray in color and platy to exfoliating in bark character with age
- prone to fissures (frost crack or borer-induced) that ooze a thick, gummy sap

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Function

- specimen, foundation, border, or entranceway ornamental tree
- often used near bodies of water to showcase its cascading, waterfall-like weeping effect

Texture

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

Assets

- strongly weeping and cascading habit on a relatively large ornamental tree
- pendulous, relatively unbranched stems sway easily in the breeze
- rapid growth and establishment
- accent tree in late winter or early spring, with its showy pink flowers that emerge before the foliage, on pendulous branches
- relatively long-lived (on average) for a Cherry

Liabilities

- several potential diseases and pests, as is typical of most Rose Family members
- marginally hardy in severe zone 5 winters, especially at the graft union on established trees, or the entire tree on recent transplants
- watersprouts and root suckers, if not removed, will destroy the weeping character of the tree

Habitat

- Zones 5 to 8
- Native to Japan

SELECTIONS

Alternates

- early to mid-spring-flowering ornamental trees (*Amelanchier*, *Cornus florida*, *Malus*, *Prunus serrulata*, *Pyrus calleryana*, etc.)
- weeping or cascading flowering trees or large shrubs (*Caragana arborescens* 'Pendula' or 'Walker', *Malus* 'Louisa', Molten Lava™, 'Red Jade', 'Weeping Candied Apple', or 'White Cascade', etc.)

Cultivars - Variants - Related species

- Prunus subhirtella* var. *autumnalis* - an upright oval form with a few sporadic flowers in autumn (mostly obscured by the still persistent foliage), and a heavy floral display of semi-double pink flowers in spring, maturing at 30' x 20'
- Prunus subhirtella* 'Pendula Plena Rosea' - a double-flowering form with pink flowers, maturing at 40' x 25' with the same weeping growth habit as 'Pendula'
- Prunus Snow Fountains*® ('Snofozam') - sometimes considered a small tree cultivar of Weeping Higan Cherry, this dwarf hybrid matures at about 12' x 12' when top-grafted onto a 5' standard, (also available as a groundcover for embankments or cascading over walls) with stout stems that repeatedly arch, branch, and cascade to the ground, having showy white flowers in early spring before the foliage, but again prone to the typical diseases and pests of the genus (especially Japanese beetle) and dieback or death in severe zone 5 winters

