

STATE-BY-STATE
GARDENING

MISSOURI GARDENER

MISSOURI'S OWN GUIDE TO GREAT GARDENING & LANDSCAPING

Create Winter
Pizzazz

Tips for
Diversifying
Your Landscape

THE BEST-TASTING
VEGETABLES

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19

Features

- 12 Create Winter Pizzazz
- 16 Hottest Peppers for Missouri
- 19 A Different Kind of Snow
- 24 Witch Hazels' Explosive Color
- 32 Winterscape with Garden Art
- 35 Build a (Real?) Fairy Garden
- 38 Tool Time
- 40 Go Out and Look
- 42 Diversify Your Landscape



52



On The Cover

Cardinal Candy®
Viburnum.

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60

Departments

- 4 Ask The Expert
Advice for gardeners
across Missouri
- 6 Region Reports
Gardening information
specifically for your area
- 28 How To Do That
Spring Bulbs in Containers
- 44 The Conscientious
Gardener
Green Christmas Trees
- 52 Garden Profile
Lavender and Roses
- 56 Landscape Design
Outdoor Escape
- 60 Hot Plants
'Afterglow' (*Ilex verticillata*)
- 61 Hot Plants
South African Amaryllis
- 62 Calendar of Events
- 66 Only in Missouri



A Different Kind of

The Snow Fountains[®] weeping cherry tree stands out in the ornamental crowd as it offers four seasons of beauty for year-round appeal. It also can be clipped, pruned, shaped, staked, bent and otherwise manipulated into a dozen or more forms. This is one small chameleon tree that you might not recognize from afar, but you will admire and desire it. *By Maria Zampini*

As defined in Webster's Dictionary, the word "versatile" means "having many uses or applications." In a landscape setting how many ways can one single plant be used? Realistically, most plants only have a few uses. But there is always an exception to every rule. Snow Fountains® weeping cherry is like a chameleon and can take on more than a dozen different looks, one just right for your landscape. I think you'll be surprised at the many faces of this early-spring-flowering beauty.

Many Propagation Methods

One of the reasons this tree can take on so many different shapes is that licensed wholesale growers can propagate it by a variety of propagation methods. It can be top grafted, bottom budded or duplicated by softwood cuttings.

Top grafting creates an umbrella look, which is likely how many homeowners are familiar with it. Snow Fountains® is commonly top grafted, usually onto a cherry root understock and it can be grafted at any height. You can occasionally find it grafted on to *Prunus serrula* understock. *Prunus serrula*, also known as paperbark cherry, has cinnamon red, exfoliating bark which gives additional winter interest. Top-grafted trees can be a specimen or even grouped for more dramatic impact.

Bottom budding and softwood propagation will produce a more natural, fountain-like appearance. These two manners of propagation produce branching from the base of the tree (as opposed to top grafting where branches start at a designated height) and along the trunk. Tree height will be determined in part by how high it is originally staked.

According to Steve Maddox, garden center manager of Rice's Nursery and Landscape in Canton, Ohio, he's seen an increase in sales of the more free-flowing style. "My customers are using this form of Snow Fountains® as an ornamental screen."

More Than a One-Trick Pony

Snow Fountains® is not limited to being just a tree. If bottom budded or cutting grown, and if you simply leave it unstaked when young, its branches will grow horizontally giving you a ground cover. Yep, ground cover!

Planted and left unstaked next to a retaining wall, it can gracefully cascade over the wall. What better way to break up a blah, blank wall than with a spray of snow?

If you have a flair for "funky," try a Snow Fountains® where the trunk has been bent and taped to a stake during the growing period. This technique produces a serpentine- or corkscrew-shaped trunk.

Continued on page 22.



Top: In its most natural form, Snow Fountains®, when blooming, creates a fountain-like effect. It can be used as a specimen or a barrier plant. **Middle:** You may not automatically think of Snow Fountains® for a group planting, but it can bring a certain dramatic flair as a focal point or as a definitely different "hedge" or barrier planting. **Above:** When young, the trunk can be gently bent to create a serpentine "S" or into just about any shape you can imagine as this one-of-a-kind Snow Fountains® proves. **Opposite page, bottom left:** In its most common form as a top graft, it has been a staple in the landscape. Many homeowners however, can't resist trimming it into an "umbrella." Leaving it untrimmed will soften its look.



Left: Abundant cascades of snow white flowers adorn the pendulous branches of Snow Fountains® for an early profusion of color. Below: Even during the summer, a naturally branched Snow Fountains® is a landscape display highlight at Phipps Conservatory, Pittsburgh, Penn.



Just the Facts

Snow Fountains® is smaller than other weeping cherries. Its mature height depends (in part) at what height it is grafted and how high a bottom bud or softwood cutting tree is staked. Regardless, in general, height ranges from 6 to 12 feet and spread of 6 to 12 feet.

This moderately fast-growing tree has finely textured branches that provide a graceful, strongly weeping habit. Young stems are a smooth and shiny brown with creamy-white lenticels. It also has sparse, small, black fruit.

Hardy to Zone 4, it prefers sun with a moist, well-drained, loamy soil. It is adaptable to a wide range of cultural conditions and is heat and drought tolerant.

Easy to Espalier

Snow Fountains® also is great as an espalier along a fence, trellis, building, arch, arbor or screen.

Creating an espalier is a challenge even a novice gardener can undertake. To try it yourself, you'll need a young tree, either from a bottom bud or a softwood cutting, approximately 6 to 8 feet in height (ask your nursery or garden center about the propagation method). Plant your trees anytime as long as the ground isn't frozen. Your support structure must be solid. Start by properly planting your tree as close as possible to the structure.

Choose young, flexible limbs, which are best bent in the spring and summer. Use soft twine or tying tape to hold branches in place. Ties must be firm, but not loose or too tight, leaving room for growth. Trim the trained lateral branches two to three times a year to keep a clean look.

For archways or arbors, depending on the size, you'll plant one tree on either side of the structure or one at each corner. Tie the dominant limbs up each side or corner post. Prune any unnecessary lateral branches.

To create an espalier on a fence, plant one tree at each main post. Cut the central leader off at the top of the post. Select two or three branches on each side of the tree to run along each horizontal railing. Tie the limbs in place and prune any unused lateral branches.

For a wall or building espalier, choose only single branches for horizontal use. Fasten the limbs to the wall with nail clips. Or you can use regular nails and bend them at an angle and tie branches to them with string. Simply trim the ends of the limbs off at the desired width.

If you're not the do-it-yourself type, no worries. There are wholesale nurseries, like Bountiful Farms of Woodburn, Oregon, who are offering Snow Fountains® and other specialty trees in their "Patio Collection." This series contains trees pre-formed in arches, umbrellas and 5- and 7-foot-screens. Bountiful Farms' products are shipped from coast to coast and are available or can be ordered through your local independent retailer or landscaper.

More Than a One-Season Wonder

Snow Fountains® weeping cherry stands out in the ornamental crowd as it offers four seasons of beauty for year-round appeal. In early spring it provides a massing cascade of single, white blooms. Pedicels and flower centers are a deep maroon. The lightly fragrant flowers can develop a pinkish cast towards the end of the blooming cycle.

Crisp green, serrated leaves in summer will turn shades of orange, gold and red in the fall. Lastly its unique habit, no matter which style you've chosen, provides winter interest.

Kylee Hartwig Baumlee of ohgardener.com/ourlittleacre said, "The Snow Fountains® weeping cherry tree in my yard never fails to garner comments when it's in bloom. I've found that it's an easy tree to keep contained too, with some judicious pruning, if you need to. While it's certainly beautiful when located where it can do its thing, it's nice to know you can still enjoy having this if your space is smaller than ideal. Its weeping form is attractive all year." 🐦

Maria Zampini is the owner of Lake County New Plants LLC which markets and licenses LCN Selections new plant introductions. She is a featured writer and columnist in consumer magazines and horticultural trade journals as well as a nationally known speaker on plant patents, trademarks and new plant introductions.

Middle right: Snow Fountains® brings a cascade of fire to the autumn landscape with shades of red, orange and yellow. Right: A top graft in autumn.



PHOTOS: MARIA ZAMPINI



Far left: Snow Fountains® is easily espaliered against a wall, split rail fence, trellis or arbor. It can add a punch of bright white spring color, crisp summer green and a fall fiesta of colors to an otherwise bland backdrop. When placed against a building it can also help your energy efficiency by adding a cooling effect. Left: The crisp green color and unique shape add summertime interest. Below left: Imagine this gorgeous Snow Fountains® arbor in cedar boxes in your outdoor living room.



'Peach Flambe'



'Electra'



'Obsidian'

Better Together

Laurel and Hardy. Fred and Ginger. By themselves, these performers were good, but paired together they were a winning combination. The perfect companion plant for Snow Fountains® is heuchera, also commonly known as coral bells. Together, they're simply spectacular.

Any boldly colored heuchera will create a striking contrast against the graceful Snow Fountains® in spring, summer, fall or winter. And some of the favorite heuchera on today's market are from Terra Nova

Nurseries (www.terravanurseries.com).

If you like the unusual then 'Electra' is for you. Its leaves have shocking blood-red veins that boldly stand out against leaves, which emerge yellow in the spring, turn chartreuse in the summer and fall and finally tan in the winter. Just think how that will pop against the orange, gold and red fall foliage of Snow Fountains®.

'Peach Flambe' offers large, bright-peach-colored leaves with white flowers on 16-inch stems. Even more striking is

how the undersides practically glow when backlit by the sun. Leaves finally mature to purple in the winter.

Last but not least is 'Obsidian'. Its purple color is so dark, it is considered black. Its shiny, broadly rounded leaves hold up well in a variety of garden conditions. Heat and sun tolerant, it won't fade.

All of these selections are medium-sized plants hardy to Zone 4, take full sun or part shade, are drought tolerant, attract hummingbirds and provide winter interest.