

The Problem With Pears

Help stop the spread of invasive ornamental pear tree hybrids across the landscape.

Over the past few decades, the Bradford pear became one of America’s most loved trees for its attractive appearance, ease of care, and universal availability. Its showy white flowers in early spring made it a highly desirable tree for front yards. As these trees aged, their inherent structural weakness began to express itself with lost limbs and splitting following wind, snow, and ice events. The nursery industry slowly shifted to other pear cultivars such as ‘Aristocrat’ and ‘Chanticleer’ that were not as structurally vulnerable.

However, during the last several years ornamental pears have begun to invade natural areas. Once considered largely sterile due to its inability to produce fertile fruit, pear varieties unexpectedly began to interbreed and reproduce. The hybrid fruit is eaten by birds and spread across the landscape where seedlings are successfully becoming established in fields, right-of-ways, and other open areas.

No ornamental pear variety of any kind should be planted within the City of Liberty.



The resulting highly invasive wild population can be ecologically damaging and economically costly to control or remove. Over time, these trees can displace native plant communities. Pears are becoming increasingly noticeable along roadsides and the edges of woodlots in our area. Once established, these trees are not easily eliminated. Cutting will typically result in numerous new sprouts that only multiplies the problem. No Callery pear variety of any kind should be planted within the City of Liberty.

Liberty residents, business owners, and landscapers can help stop the spread of ornamental pears. Aging pear trees will inevitably lose limbs and decline in health. These should be eliminated as soon as possible to eliminate a source of pollen and seed. When planting trees in the future, please consider non-invasive native alternatives to ornamental pears.

The following tree species make great native alternatives to the ornamental pear:

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| Flowering dogwood <i>Cornus florida</i> | Blackhaw viburnum <i>Viburnum prunifolium</i> |
| Eastern redbud <i>Cercis canadensis</i> | Red horse chestnut <i>Aesculus pavia</i> |
| Downy serviceberry <i>Amelanchier arborea</i> | Hophornbeam <i>Ostrya virginiana</i> |
| Chokecherry <i>Prunus virginiana</i> | Prairie crabapple <i>Malus ionensis</i> |
| American plum <i>Prunus americana</i> | Hawthorn <i>Crataegus</i> spp. |

