

PLANT HEALTH CARE REPORT



Japanese Cherry

Originally planted in 1912 around the Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C., blossoming Japanese cherry trees continue to commemorate friendship between the Japanese government and US government. Cuttings taken from the original trees have been sent as gifts to Japan and used in replacement plantings to preserve the grove's genetic heritage. Of the twelve types originally planted, two are commonly found in landscapes today:



Prunus x yedoensis

Yoshino Cherry (*Prunus x yedoensis*): a medium-sized tree, 40-50' tall, with slightly fragrant pink or white flowers

Kwanzan Cherry (*Prunus serrulata* 'Kwanzan'): a small tree, 20-30' tall with large double pink flowers.

The cultural requirements of Japanese cherries vary with rootstocks and varieties, but they all require full sun and well-drained soil. Japanese cherries are susceptible to disease and insect problems, particularly when they are planted too deeply or when mulch is piled against the lower stem. Over-fertilizing can also lead to insect



Prunus serrulata 'Kwanzan'

infestations, so fertilizer applications should be prescribed based on a soil analysis.

Japanese cherries are members of the genus *Prunus*, which also includes peaches, plums, apricots, and almonds. Dr. Michael Dirr, author and University of Georgia professor, states the following regarding Japanese cherries. “The delicate flowers pass quickly but in their finest hours are the equal of any ornamental tree. Unfortunately, *Prunus* as a group is beset with insect and disease problems...” [1]

The most common problems in the landscape include:

1. Cankers and blight: caused by many fungi, including shoot blight and black knot. Trees weakened by transplanting and environmental stress are most susceptible.

2. Root rots: commonly caused by *Phytophthora*, a problem in poorly drained sites. *Armillaria* also targets stressed trees.

3. Borers: peach tree borer (*Synanthedon exitiosa*), shothole borer (*Scolytus rugulosus*) in the Pacific Northwest, a range of ambrosia beetles, and many other insects invade the bark and stem.

4. Scales: San Jose scale (*Quadraspidiotus perniciosus*), white peach scale (*Pseudaulacaspis*

Monitoring and Treatment Considerations for Japanese Cherry

Late winter

Apply dormant treatment to suppress overwintering insects. Expose and inspect root collar for problems; add mulch as needed. Remove dead, dying, diseased (especially cankered branches), and conflicting branches. Reduce or remove branches to promote appropriate structure. Sample soil for nutrient and pH levels. If plants exhibit decline, sample roots or root crown for *Phytophthora* root rot.

Early spring

Apply fungicide treatment to suppress leaf spot, shoot blight, and black knot on trees with a history of these diseases. Apply dormant treatment to suppress scales, mites, and aphids.

Mid-spring

Apply fungicide treatment to suppress leaf spot, shoot blight, and black knot on trees with a history of these diseases. Monitor for borers, scales, caterpillars, mites, and aphids; treat as needed. Apply bark treatment to prevent borers, particularly in cases of injury to the bark or recent transplants. Fertilize, adjust pH, and amend soil according to soil analysis.

Late spring

Apply fungicide treatment to suppress leaf spot, shoot blight, and black knot on trees with a history of these diseases. Monitor for scales, caterpillars, mites, and aphids; treat as needed.

sp.), and several other species feed on branches and stem.

5. Insect defoliators: cankerworms (*Alsophila* and *Paleacrita*), tent caterpillars (*Malacosoma*), Japanese beetles, and many others feed on leaves.

Reference

- [1] M. A. Dirr, "Manual of Woody Landscape Plants," 4th ed., Stipes Publishing Co., 1975.

Summer

Monitor for borers, scales, caterpillars, mites, and aphids; treat as needed. Inspect irrigation and soil moisture levels to reduce moisture stress and prevent root disease. Inspect mulch levels and adjust as needed. Remove cankered or blighted branches.

Early fall

Monitor for borers, scales, caterpillars, mites, and aphids; treat as needed. If sucking insects were problematic this past growing season, consider treating with an appropriately timed systemic product. Ensure adequate soil moisture levels to minimize winter injury. Remove mulch from stems to reduce risk of disease and rodent injury.
