

# Bird Cherry

*Prunus padus* L.

## Taxonomic Classification

Domain: *Eukaryotes*

Kingdom: *Plantae*

Subkingdom:

*Tracheobionta*

Super Division: *Spermatophyta*

Phylum/Division:

*Magnoliophyta*

Class: *Magnoliopsida*

Order: *Rosales*

Family: *Rosaceae*

Genus: *Prunus*

Species: *padus*

[1]



## Botanical Description

Small deciduous trees, rarely taller than 8 meters tall. Branchlets brown or becoming brown, smooth or covered with fine small hairs. Leaf blades to 6-13 cm long and 3.5-6 cm wide. Leaf shape is a wide elliptic (oval) to oblanceolate (egg shape with the stem attached at the narrowest end) or obovate (egg shaped). Leaf margins serrate (coarsely toothed) and abruptly acuminate. Petioles typically bearing glands. Flowers are in racemes (elongated clusters) with leafy peduncles, 10 - 15 flowers per cluster, racemes are 7 - 12 cm long and 12 - 22 mm wide. The pedicels (flower stalk) 3 -17 mm long and have bracts which detach easily. Petals white, 5 - 7.5 mm, smooth and hairless. Fruit is a black, bitter astringent (is capable of absorbing body fluids) berry that ripens mid-summer 6- 8 mm long [5].

# Identification Tips

*Prunus padus* (Bird cherry) fruit taste extremely bitter, much like its close relative, *Prunus virginiana* (Chokecherry) Both typically have smooth and hairless leaves, however. Bird cherry can have veins beneath the leaf whereas Chokecherry leaves are smooth, mostly hairless, only sometimes having small fine hairs and will not show veins on the lower leaf surface.

## Fun Fact!

The genus, *Prunus*, in Latin translates to plum or cherry tree.



[6] Flowers



[7] Fruits



[7] Leaves

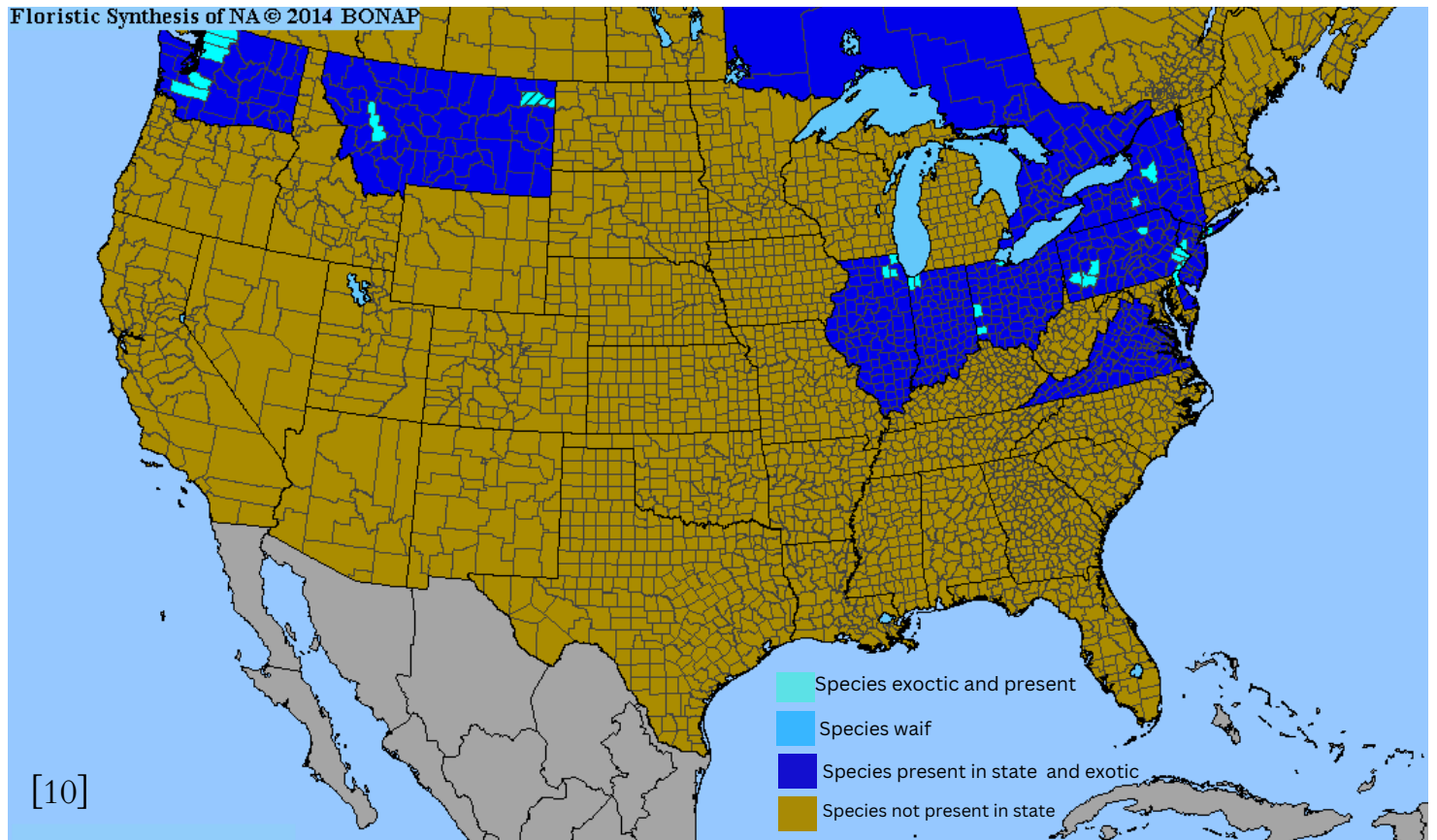
## Ethnobotanical and Other Uses

Traditional uses of the Bird Cherry in European ethnomedicine include mostly to reduce pain, fever, and inflammation [8]. The berries can be eaten, as they are enriched with substances that contain anti-microbial properties, but they are bitter. The flowers can be chewed and the young leaves can be served as a cooked vegetable, as done in Korea [9]. In the United States, the tree is mostly planted as an ornamental in parks and along roadsides.



# Habitat Range

Floristic Synthesis of NA © 2014 BONAP



[10]



[11]

## Conservation Status

Bird cherry is considered an established ornamental, sometimes an invasive spreading in riparian areas [12].

## Plant Ecology

Introduced from Eurasia, it has now become a cultivated ornamental of yards in Utah [12] and other states in the United States. Sometimes established in roads, thickets, and along roadsides. In its native range it occupies wet woodland, meadows, riverbanks and forest clear cuts [13].

Flowers bloom April to May. Reproduces sexually by seed, vegetatively by clonal root and basal sprouts. Flowers are able to self-pollinate and set fruit (without a cross pollinator) [13].

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