

From Cam's Garden: Cercis

Cercis are small deciduous trees growing from 15 to 20 feet in height. The branches grow quite wide and low down. The leaves are medium sized and heart shaped. The flowers emerge before the leaves, in April or May and are usually a magenta that turns lighter as they age.



Cercis siliquastrum (left): This variety originates from the Mediterranean area. It is commonly called Judas Tree, stemming from the legend that Judas hanged himself from this tree. It needs very well-drained soil and does not tolerate too cold and damp conditions. The flowers are followed by red seed pods that will ripen in the summer. There is also a white variety.

Cercis canadensis (right): This tree, also known as Eastern Redbud, originates from eastern North America. It appears to be much hardier than Judas Tree and can stand more adverse conditions. I have this variety and enjoy its brilliant-coloured flowers in the spring. A month ago I pruned some of the lower branches and brought them into the house. It is February now and the flowers are starting to show, two months before the tree will flower outdoors.

There is also a cultivar called Forest Pansy. It has reddish purple leaves and is readily available in the nurseries. However, I find that the flowers on my tree seem more vibrant than on the purple-leafed variety.

Cam MacKenzie



Leaf colour of *Cercis c.* 'Forest Pansy'



Typical *Cercis* leaf



Cercis c. f. alba 'Royal White'