

**Hawthorn (*Crataegus*)**  
**By Rebecca Hargrave**

Hawthorn is a familiar sight in Northeastern forests, a small tree with large thorns tends to be unforgettable.

There are many species of hawthorn that will make good forest crops, both native and non-native. In general they are 20 to 30 feet tall and as big or bigger in spread, with early, white and pink spring flowers and red fall leaves. This shade tolerant species likes moist, well-drained soils and can handle a range of pH levels. As a member of the rose family it suffers from similar diseases and pests, but is fairly easy to manage with some big pests being cedar-hawthorn rust and hawthorn leaf blight. Hawthorn can be transplanted in the spring and can be grown from seed. The fruit or "haws," resemble little apples and range from deep to faded red and are popular as food or for their ornamental quality.

Hawthorn haws and flowers are used to make jams, jellies and spreads, in drinks and baked goods, and even in ice cream. Many varieties are prolific fruiterers, producing so many haws that the branches hang to the ground. The haws also attract wildlife, which can be both good and bad, but the large thorns found on most species help to deter some pests. There is a lot of variability within the genus, some hawthorns have thorns, some are thornless, some species have lobed leaves, while others are entire. This can make identifying native populations fairly easy, but there are lists containing up to 1000 varieties.