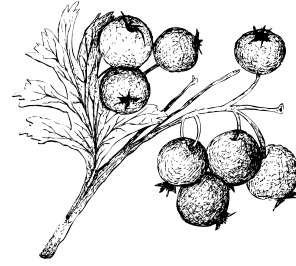


# HAWTHORN

**SCIENTIFIC NAME: CRATAEGUS SPP.**



## SPECIES OVERVIEW

Hawthorns are a diverse genus of tall shrubs and trees within the Rosaceae family. These species are distributed across temperate regions throughout the northern hemisphere of North America, Europe, and Asia, encompassing over 200 species. Recognizable by their simple toothed leaves, white or pink clustered flowers, apple-like fruit called "haws", and the presence of small sharp-tipped branches (thorns), hawthorns often hybridize with one another, posing challenges for distinct species identification in their natural ranges.

In Alberta, there are occurrences of a species of hawthorn, the round-leaved hawthorn (*Crataegus chrysocarpa*), which are found within the Grassland Subregion. Hawthorn fruit comes in various colors ranging from yellow to purple, with the round-leaved hawthorn showcasing a bright red berry-like fruit. Despite its thorns, hawthorns provide nesting habitat for small birds, and its fruit is forage material for wildlife in the winter months.



## CULTURAL VALUE

Hawthorn is a culturally significant species for many diverse communities across the globe. The scientific name *Crataegus* is derived from the Greek word 'kràtaigos,' which conveys strength and robustness.

In Gaelic, hawthorns are known as 'sgitheach' and play a unique role in Celtic mythology and folklore, where hawthorns are often connected to the tales of fairies. Throughout Celtic lore, hawthorns are believed to ward off evil spirits and bring good luck, forming a common theme. In the Celtic tree zodiac, the period from May 13th to June 9th is represented by the hawthorn, symbolizing fertility.

The Chinese hawthorn (*Crataegus pinnatifida*), known as Shān Zhā, 山楂 in Mandarin, is prominent in Chinese culture for its medicinal properties. First recorded for treating dysentery in AD 659, hawthorns continue to be utilized in traditional Chinese medicine to aid digestion and improve blood circulation. In Beijing, the hawthorn is celebrated as one of the city's most popular trees and is often used to make tanghulu, a traditional fruit candy on a bamboo stick. Shandong province is not only renowned for its contribution to the local economy but also for its folklore surrounding the linkage of hawthorns with love and marriage, symbolizing fidelity and eternal devotion.



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