

# Eastern redbud

(*Cercis canadensis*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_botanical\\_terms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms).

Eastern redbud is a deciduous perennial large shrub to small tree. It occurs naturally in mesic hardwood hammocks and typically blooms in March, at which time the entire crown of the tree will become covered in deep pink blooms. Its leaves provide food for many caterpillars, including the lo moth. Flowers depend on long-tongued bees for pollination. The plant is browsed by white-tailed deer, and seeds are eaten by bobwhites and other birds.

Eastern redbud's irregular flowers are pink to magenta and born in clusters of four to eight within leaf axils and along branches and trunks. Flower buds are small, dark red to reddish-brown, and appear in winter. They bloom in profusion before new leaves emerge. Young leaves are yellowish-green and emerge folded along the midrib. As they mature, they unfurl and turn a dull green. They are paper-thin and cordate to orbicular with entire margins and a pointed apex. In the fall, they may turn bright yellow. Leaf arrangement is alternate. The trunk is often twisted and covered in gray to reddish-brown bark. Branches are thin and may zigzag as they grow. Fruits are flattened pods that contain 10 or more seeds.

Both the flowers and seeds are edible to humans; flowers can be eaten raw or boiled and seeds may be roasted.

**Family:** Fabaceae (Legume, pea or bean family)

**Native range:** Panhandle; north and west central peninsula

To see where natural populations of Eastern redbud have been vouchered, visit [www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).

**Hardiness:** Zones 8A–9B

**Soil:** Well-drained neutral to mildly acidic soil; can tolerate occasional periods of brief flooding

**Exposure:** Full sun to partial shade

**Growth habit:** 20–30' tall; crown 15'+ spread

**Propagation:** Seed

**Garden tips:** Eastern redbud is a relatively fast-growing flowering tree. Plant it with flowering dogwood for a beautiful, colorful spring display. It is susceptible to canker, so diseased branches should be pruned as soon as they are noticed.

Eastern redbud plants are often available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit [www.PlantRealFlorida.org](http://www.PlantRealFlorida.org) to find a nursery in your area.



Photo by Eleanor Dietrich



Lo moth caterpillars on redbud leaves. Photo by Gardening Solutions (Creative Commons license).