



Plants for Birds: **Serviceberry** (Saskatoon, Juneberry, Shadbush)

- **Scientific Name:** *Amelanchier alnifolia*
- **Height:** 4-25 feet | **Hardiness:** Zone 2-4 depending on cultivar
- **Wildlife value:** Berries are highly desirable food for birds and other wildlife. Also provides cover and nesting sites

Serviceberry is a native shrub/tree of the western United States and all of Canada. It's a plant species that tops the list for attracting a wide variety of birds with its abundant small purple berries. Whole flocks of birds will converge in these trees, chirping and chattering as they feed on the berries. Over 40 species of birds have been seen feasting on the fruit including waxwings, warblers, woodpeckers, thrushes, grosbeaks, finches, chickadees, and grouse.

Amelanchier is a great addition to any type of garden adding a variety of color in spring and fall as well as producing fruit in the summer. For landscaping they are often used in borders, backdrops, or screens. Serviceberry blooms early with fragrant masses of snowy white flowers that attract insects. In late June it produces dark purple berries (hence the name Juneberry) that attract birds and also provide good eating for humans. It is a very important food to Native Americans who for centuries have eaten and gathered the berries to make bread and fruit leather, flavor stews, and as an addition to other food items. It makes good jams, jellies, and pies and some people even make a wine with the sweet fruit. In the fall serviceberry leaves turn brilliant red, yellow, and orange which certainly would brighten any corner in the garden.

This beautiful deciduous native is low maintenance and quite drought tolerant. It can grow in almost any type of soil but prefers well drained, rich loamy soils and full sun. If you are growing for a large berry crop, keep the plant moist the majority of the spring through summer and add compost. Serviceberry can grow very large, up to 25 feet tall and 15 feet wide. For a smaller space consider the 'Regent' cultivar, which remains a compact 4-6 feet tall (available in nurseries locally).

As you plan the addition of serviceberry into your garden make sure to plant enough to share. Plant one for you and your family and plant one for the birds! ~ *Leslie Eddington*