

Propagating Redbud from Seed

Beverley Andalora
Mariposa Native Plants Nursery



Photo courtesy of Calscape.org

Who is Mariposa Native Plants Nursery

You never know who's
going to show up to
buy plants



- Partnership: Beverley Andalora & Ron Allen
 - Ron: Master propagator, website
 - Beverley: Advertising, marketing
- Started 2017 propagating only milkweeds to sell at the Butterfly Festival as a community service
- People requested pollinator plants, so expanded; now carry 100+ varieties
- Sell California natives, focused on what does well in Sierra foothills
- Located on Yosemite Oaks Rd, Midpines Summit

Plant list link at <https://MariposaNativePlants.com>

Why Plant Redbuds?

- Beautiful, brilliant spring blossoms cover the whole tree
- Supports a lot of wildlife
- Drought tolerant & fire resistant
- Grows in a variety of soils
- Good garden size (10-20 ft tall, 10-15 ft wide)
- Nice rounded shape, pretty bark, and rounded fluttering leaves
- Can be pruned to a tree or left as a large shrub
- Needs little care

More info at <https://calscape.org/Cercis-occidentalis-%28Western-Redbud%29>

Interesting Facts About Redbuds



Photo courtesy of Calscape.org

- There are 2 species of redbud native to North America
- Used for various purposes by Native American Indians
- Blossoms are edible and can be used in salads or to make jelly
- Blossoms have 5 petals that range in color from pinkish magenta to reddish purple

- Is a leguminous shrub related to the pea (the *Fabaceae* family)
- Lives 40-150 years
- Found in at least five plant communities: oak woodland, chaparral, mixed conifer forest, riparian woodland, and closed cone forest



Photo courtesy of Calscape.org

Native American Uses

- Southern Sierra Miwuk used young redbud shoots for the reddish color in baskets
 - They encouraged young shoots to grow using fire (previous method) or pruning (current method)
- Other Native Americans used redbud roots and bark as a remedy for diarrhea and dysentery (don't try this at home!)
- Navajo roasted the seedpods of redbud in ashes and ate the seeds
- More info: <https://ethnobiology.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/JoE/11-1/Anderson.pdf>



Photo courtesy of nps.org
Basket by Lucy Hite, ca. 1897, Southern Miwuk

Redbud Species

- Two species of redbud trees native to North America are the Western or California Redbud (*Cercis Occidentalis*) and the Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)
 - Any other redbuds are nonnative or cultivars
- “White redbud” is a dilute red genetic mutation that produces white to light pink flowers
 - Seeds usually do not propagate a white redbud, but cuttings can

Western vs. Eastern Redbud

- They look nearly identical
- Accompanying table is from <https://worldofgardenplants.com/western-redbud-vs-eastern-redbud/>
- Eastern redbud are larger & more cold hardy. Can plant Eastern redbud above 4,000 ft.

	Western Redbud	Eastern Redbud
Name	<i>Cercis occidentalis</i>	<i>Cercis canadensis</i>
USDA Hardiness zone	6-9	4-9
Mature height	10-15 (3-4.5 m)	20-30' (6-9 m)
Mature width	10-15 (3-4.5 m)	20-30' (6-9 m)
Growth rate	medium	fast
Light exposure	full sun, partial shade	full sun, partial shade
Soil	moist, drained	moist, drained
Soil pH	6.0-7.0	6.0-7.0
Watering	One time per week in a drought	One time per week in a drought
Diseases	fungus, root rot	fungus, root rot
Pests	insects, mites	insects, mites

Where to Plant & How to Care for Redbuds

- Plant in full sun to partial shade—Needs about 6 hrs of sun per day
- Can plant anytime, although fall is ideal; summer planting requires more water the 1st year
- Plant while small: Easier to handle, Smaller hole to dig, Will catch up with larger sprouts
- Prefer light sandy soils but can grow in most soils—cannot tolerate soggy soil
- Provide mulch to retain moisture and reduce weeds—make a mulch doughnut (leave space around the trunk) to limit disease
- If pruning, prune when the tree is dormant in winter—can be pruned back or to tree shape
- Established redbuds need little attention

Redbud Seed Prep Overview

See propagation handout for details:

- Scarify seeds: Boiling water, sandpaper, or sulfuric acid
- Stratify seeds: Place on moist paper or in other media, put in plastic bag, and refrigerate for 6-10 weeks; don't let them freeze
- Check regularly to ensure they aren't moldy or if they need more water
- When radicle (root) appears, place in a container or in the ground, 1/2" deep
 - In summer, use mulch to retain moisture
 - If in a container: Provide sunlight; For faster sprouting, provide heat (heat mat), if needed

Planting Sprouts

- Dig a hole about two times the size of the pot
- If in a gopher area, put a gopher cage in the hole and leave 3” above ground.
- Cut any roots that encircle the root ball and loosen the roots, so there is space between the roots.
- Hold the sprout so the spot where the roots flare out from the trunk is just above the soil surface, then refill the hole with the soil you dug out and tamp down lightly.
- No amendments (compost, fertilizer, etc.)—Easy access to nutrients slows root expansion.
- 1st year, water 1 gallon (about 1 inch) once a week, until winter rains start. Do not leave the tree in saturated soil. If droopy in the morning, give a little more water.

Resources

- *Seed Propagation of Native California Plants*, by Dara E. Emery (\$15)
- <https://calscape.org/Cercis-occidentalis-%28Western-Redbud%29>
- <https://ethnobiology.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/JoE/11-1/Anderson.pdf>
- <https://worldofgardenplants.com/western-redbud-vs-eastern-redbud/>
- https://plants.usda.gov/DocumentLibrary/plantguide/pdf/pg_ceor9.pdf
- Hardiness zone maps: <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/>