

Cornelian cherry

The *Cornus mas*, commonly known as the Cornelian cherry or European cornel, is a small deciduous tree or large shrub that belongs to the family Cornaceae. Native to Europe, Western Asia, and parts of the Middle East, it is valued for its ornamental beauty, edible fruits, and early spring blossoms.

The Cornelian cherry typically grows to a height of 4 to 8 meters although it can occasionally reach up to 10 meters. It has a rounded to spreading crown with dense branches that form an attractive silhouette. The bark of the tree is smooth and greyish brown in colour.

One of the notable features of the Cornelian cherry is its early blooming period, often occurring in late winter to early spring before the leaves emerge. The small, bright yellow flowers appear in dense clusters, creating a striking display against the still dormant landscape. The flowers are an important source of nectar for early pollinators such as bees and butterflies.

The fruits of the Cornelian cherry are oval-shaped drupes that resemble small cherries. They start off green and ripen to a deep red or dark purple colour in late summer to early autumn. The fruits are edible and have a tart flavour, often used for making preserves, jams and juices.

Cornus mas trees are adaptable and can thrive in a range of soil types, including sandy, loamy, and clay soils. They prefer full sun to partial shade and can tolerate moderate drought once established. The trees are also known for their cold hardiness, making them suitable for temperate and continental climates.

Apart from its ornamental and culinary uses, Cornelian cherry has cultural significance in some regions and has been used in traditional medicine for various purposes. The wood of the tree is dense and has been used for small woodworking projects.

In summary, the Cornelian cherry is a charming deciduous tree or shrub known for its early spring blossoms, attractive fruits, and vibrant autumn foliage. It is valued for its ornamental appeal, culinary uses, and adaptability to different environments.