# **Larry Sagers: Add pizazz to your garden with flowering trees**

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Recently we looked at crabapples, flowering cherries and flowering pears. While these are outstanding spring flowering trees, there are more than 80 species of flowering trees that grow in Utah. While not all of these are spring flowering, when you add the cultivated varieties, you have hundreds of choices.

The golden chain or laburnum tree is a stunning tree that tolerates our high pH soils. It has long, pendulous clusters of bright yellow flowers. One of the most beautiful displays I have ever seen of these flowering trees is laburnum arch at Hampton Court Palace in England. The pea like flowers form golden showers of color as you walk underneath the trees.

Plant these small trees in groups to create masses of color. Beware, though, the trees are somewhat weak and are often short-lived. Another drawback is that all parts of the tree — especially the seeds — are poisonous, so plant them where children will not play with them.

Fringe tree, or white fringe tree, is Chionanthus virginicus and is covered with stunning white flowers in the early spring. This tree is native to the southeastern United States but is adaptable to a wide range of growing conditions. In its native confines, it grows in wet areas and is shade tolerant.

This grows as a large shrub to medium-size tree with beautiful flowers and good form. Look for some at about 2400 South and 700 East in Salt Lake City or Red Butte Garden. This shrub is hardy down to Zone 3.

Japanese tree lilac or Syringa reticulate has long clusters of 6- to 12-inch-long white flower heads in June. This grows to a large shrub or medium-size tree, depending on how you choose to prune it. As an added bonus, it is relatively free of insects and diseases.

The tree is cold hardy to Zone 3 but does not like excessive heat. It tolerates our high pH soils and should be planted more in Utah. There is one in the Peace Gardens in Salt Lake City.

Although most magnolias are not good candidates for Utah gardens, there are a few that grow well here when given the right conditions.

Saucer magnolia, or Magnolia X soulangiana, has some of the largest and showiest of all the spring flowers on any tree in Utah. The large shrub or small trees are seen throughout much of Utah, and there are some nice specimens at the O.C. Tanner headquarters at 1930 S. State.

One drawback is that the flower buds are sometimes injured by late frosts. If you get apricots with some regularity, these trees will likely bloom well. If your garden is always plagued by late frosts, you might want to select a different tree. It is hardy to Zone 4.

Another hybrid is the lily magnolia with dramatic pink-purple flowers up to 7-inches in diameter with six long petals that appear before the leaves. It is hardy to Zone 4.

Star magnolia, or Magnolia Stellata, is hardy to Zone 4. It is common in Utah and is a good choice if you do not plant it on southern or western exposures so it is protected from warm winter sun.

Look for some nice trees on the west side of the east wall of Temple Square. The tree has white star-shaped flowers, while Loebner Magnolia (Magnolia x loebneri), a hybrid of Star Magnolia and Kobus Magnolia, has similar 5- to 8-inch diameter flowers with white to pink petals.

There are three species of serviceberry that grow here, but most of the cultivated varieties are hybrid crosses between A. arborea and A. laevis. Most are hardy to Zone 4, while the native species are hardy to Zone 3.

Saskatoon, or western serviceberry (Amelanchier alnifolia), and Utah serviceberry (Amelanchier utahensis) are native to cool canyon locations, so they will tolerate shade in the landscape. Their white flowers have narrow, strap like petals in bunches 1- to 4-inches long that bloom before the leaves appear. The fruits are edible but vary in quality.

The larger serviceberries (Amelanchier arborea) are native to the eastern United States and grow as a small understory tree. The plants have few pests and are reasonably tolerant of many conditions. As an added bonus, the plant shows great fall color.

Finding these trees might not be easy, but if they meet your landscape qualifications, they might be some of your most outstanding garden plants for many years to come.

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