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MDC Asks Public Not to Plant Invasive Bradford Pear Trees

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) encourages homeowners and landscapers to avoid planting Callery pear trees this spring.

Better known as Bradford pears, the Callery pear tree is an invasive species known to multiply quickly and crowd out Missouri native plants. While it's been a popular landscaping tree for decades, cultivated forms have spread aggressively throughout the state.

"Different varieties of Bradford pear trees were planted close to each other, which allowed them to cross pollinate and take over natural areas," said Forestry Field Program Supervisor Russell Hinnah. "But they're also a poor landscaping choice because they don't do well in storms, often losing limbs or splitting apart."

Stopping the spread means selecting alternate trees for yards and forested property.

"The best plan is to select a native species to Missouri, and there are several great options," said Hinnah. "Serviceberry trees produce similar showy white blooms in the spring and have small red fruits that attract wildlife."

Eastern redbuds and Missouri's state tree, the flowering dogwood, are also good alternatives. The redbud tree grows quickly with eye-catching lavender flowers in the spring. Dogwoods do best in shady areas but can be somewhat difficult to grow.

To learn more about native trees that are great for landscaping, visit MDC's website at <https://mdc.mo.gov/trees-plants/tree-care>. "Missouri's Urban Trees" booklet (<http://short.mdc.mo.gov/ZwB>) is a great guide for finding the right tree for the right place.