



Washington Association Of Conservation Districts

**PLANT MATERIAL CENTER**

16564 Bradley Road, Bow WA 98232

Phone (360) 757-1094 • Fax (360) 757-3923 • e-mail: pmcsales@clearwire.net

---

**BITTER CHERRY**

***Prunus emarginata***

**Distribution:** Bitter Cherry grows throughout Washington at low to mid-elevations. In western Washington, Bitter Cherry is often a component in coastal forests and in eastern Washington it is often found in Ponderosa Pine forests.

**Growth Habit:** Bitter Cherry typically grows as a deciduous upright tree, occasionally reaching 30 feet tall, but can occur in a shorter bushier form.

**Adaptability:** Bitter Cherry is adaptable to a wide range of conditions throughout its range. It can be found growing in soils that range from wet to dry and sites that vary from shady to exposed. It is commonly found growing equally well as an understory species in mixed species woodland, or as a pioneering species in open disturbed areas

**Comments:** Bitter Cherry has numerous uses as a conservation species in the state, but producing edible fruit is not one of them. Its temptingly bright red cherries that are produced in mid-summer are in fact incredibly bitter. It is not considered unpalatable for the many species of birds, bears, and rodents however, which consider it an important food source. Its stems and leaves are also good browse for deer and elk. It is also an attractive native flowering tree. A mature tree growing in a favorable site can produce a mass display of clusters of white fragrant flowers in the spring. Intermediate aged trees produce a glossy red bark that stands out in winter when all else is defoliated.

