Biology & Invasive Potential

- Trimming & cutting European Bird Cherry stimulates growth!
- Root suckers & fallen trees can create thickets of new trees
- Can create defense chemicals called cyanogenic glycosides
- In rare circumstances, these trees can cause cyanide poisoning of moose

Distribution & Abundance

- Native to Northern Europe and Asia
- Survives prolonged temperatures to -33°F
- The northern most extent in Alaska is the south side of the Brooks Range, north of the Arctic Circle
- In Alaska, it has been planted in residential landscapes, parks, and a few remote cabins
- It is rapidly invading riparian stream sides and natural forests in Anchorage and Fairbanks
- Takes over the understory of forests and forms thickets where native plants once grew

Contact Information

For plant alternatives or if you are outside of Anchorage contact:
State of Alaska - Department of Natural Resources
Plant Materials Center
Invasive Plants Program Coordinator
Heather.Stewart@alaska.gov
www.plants.alaska.gov
907-745-8721

For control and removal volunteer opportunities in Anchorage:
Anchorage Park Foundation
weeds.free.ak@gmail.com
907-339-0101

For additional information:
UAF Cooperative Extension Service
(Outside of Anchorage) 1-877-520-5211
(In Anchorage) 907-786-6315
gagraziano@alaska.edu
www.alaskainvasives.org

1-877-INVASIV
(468-2748)

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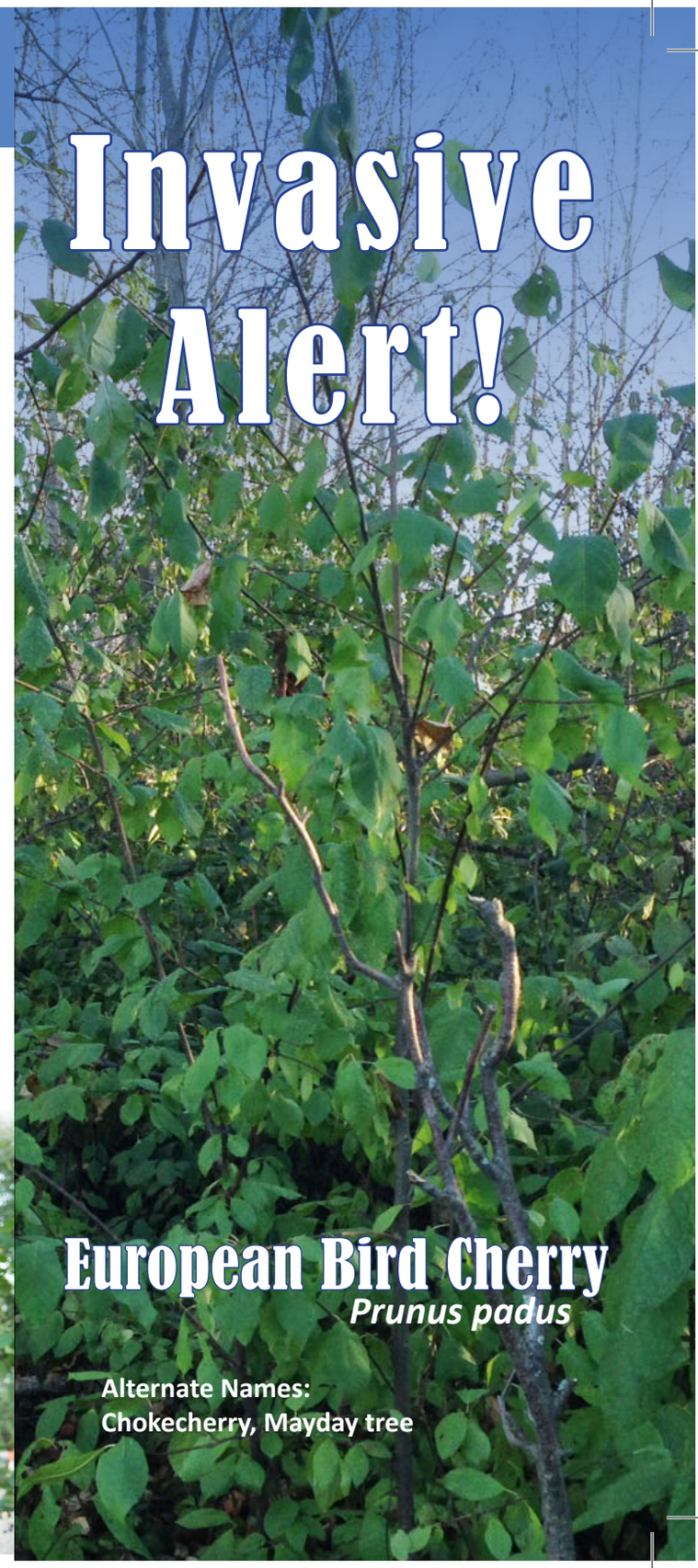
Invasive Alert!



European Bird Cherry
Prunus padus

Alternate Names:
Chokecherry, Mayday tree

Identification

European Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*) is a small deciduous tree also known as the Chokecherry or Mayday tree.

Growth

- Grows up to 35 feet tall
- Sprouts from its trunk, stems, & roots when cut
- Is rounded in shape, has low branching crowns, & its multi-stemmed growth can form dense thickets

Flowers

- Flowers are white, small, & very aromatic
- Flowers are arranged in drooping cylindrical clusters called racemes
- In Alaska, blooms are seen between late May and early June

Bark

- Bark is grey to brown & relatively smooth
- Visible pores on the bark are called lenticels

Leaves

- Leaves are ovate, elliptical, & thinning at the tip
- Leaves are dark green with 2 small glands at the base of the stem
- Edges of the leaves are sharply serrated

Fruits

- Small, bitter black cherries ripen in late summer
- Birds eat the cherries & spread the seeds to new areas

Alternative Ornamental Trees for Alaska

** A few suggested varieties are listed below. Other alternatives can be found at www.alaskaplants.org. Choose a variety that corresponds with your hardiness zone.*

Ussurian Pear (*Pyrus ussuriensis)* are the first trees to bloom & have bright fall colors in Southcentral Alaska.
Suggested variety for Alaska:
P. ussuriensis

Serviceberry (*Amelanchier*) has edible fruit that matures to sweet blue-black berries & makes delicious pies and jams.
Suggested varieties for Alaska:
A. alnifolia, A. canadensis

Crab Apple (*Malus* spp.) cultivars vary in flower color as white, pink, or maroon. Many have great fall colors & produce sweet fruit for jelly or sauce.
Suggested varieties for Alaska:
M. x ranetka, M. x 'Selkirk',

Hawthorn (*Crataegus*) has beautiful fragrant, small, pink or white flowers, & black berries called haws. Fall colors change from bright orange to red.
Suggested variety for Alaska:
C. x mordenensis 'Toba',

Management & Control

Cutting alone is not an effective solution because this tree readily re-sprouts from stumps, stems, and roots (including fragments)!

Seedlings and small trees can be pulled by hand. Trees up to 2" in diameter can be removed with a tool called an "**Uprooter™**" as shown below. Note that ALL of the roots must be removed, and the tree disposed of, or it will re-sprout!

Systemic herbicides are the most effective way to control European Bird Cherry because they are absorbed directly into the tree's vascular system to kill ALL parts of the plant so it cannot re-sprout. Certain herbicides can be applied to a cut stump to prevent the stump and roots from sprouting. UAF Cooperative Extension can provide additional information on herbicides or a commercial pesticide applicator certified in Alaska can be hired to apply herbicides for you.