

# PLANT HEALTH CARE REPORT



## Crabapple

Crabapples (*Malus* sp.) are small, versatile trees popular in urban and suburban landscapes. More than 400 species and varieties of crabapples are available representing diverse flowering and fruiting characteristics, growth forms, and pest and disease resistance.

Flowers produced in early spring are white, pink, or red. Fruit, which vary in size and color, may cling to twigs into winter providing ornamental interest and food for wildlife. Crown shape may be rounded, upright, spreading, or weeping depending on variety. Dwarf crabapples, which remain under ten feet in height, are popular in containers on sites where space is limited.



*Malus  
floribunda*



*Malus  
sargentii  
'Tina'*

As with most members of the rose family, crabapples are host to many disease and insect pests. Fireblight and apple scab are the most devastating diseases of crabapples. Fireblight is caused by a bacterium which infects through the flowers, progresses into branches and, eventually, enters the stem leading to dieback and even death of susceptible varieties. Apple scab causes infections of foliage, twigs, and fruit. Rust and other foliar diseases cause early defoliation. Multiple years of defoliation from disease reduces the tree's overall vitality. Disease-resistant varieties are widely available and should be selected.

Common leaf-chewing insects include tent caterpillars, Japanese beetles, spongy moth, and cankerworms. Aphids, scale insects, and spider mites damage leaves or branches and can be problematic when populations reach damaging levels.

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## Monitoring and Treatment Considerations for Crabapple

### Mid-winter

Expose and inspect root collar for problems; add mulch as needed. Remove dead, dying, diseased, and broken branches. Reduce or remove branches to promote structure if flower display is not a primary consideration. Otherwise, delay pruning until after bloom.

### Late winter

Apply dormant bactericide treatment to prevent fireblight on susceptible varieties. Apply dormant treatment to suppress overwintering insects. Sample soil for nutrient and pH levels.

### Early spring

Apply first fungicide treatment to prevent scab and rust on susceptible varieties. Include bactericide to prevent fireblight on susceptible varieties. Monitor for tent caterpillars, aphids, spongy moth, and other early season defoliators; treat as needed.

### Mid-spring

Apply second fungicide treatment to prevent scab and rust. Monitor for aphids, scale crawlers, tent caterpillars, and other early spring defoliators; treat as needed. Fertilize or amend soil according to soil analysis. Remove and destroy shoots with fireblight symptoms.

### Late spring

Apply third fungicide treatment to prevent scab and rust. Monitor for aphids, scale crawlers and spring defoliators; treat as needed. Remove and destroy shoots with fireblight symptoms.

### Summer

Monitor for aphids, scale crawlers, mites, and Japanese beetles; treat as needed. Reduce or remove branches to promote structure if not done in winter. Monitor irrigation and soil moisture to minimize water stress and prevent root disease.

### Fall

If scale and aphids were problematic this past growing season, consider treating with an appropriately timed systemic product. Remove fallen leaves if defoliated from foliar disease. Remove mulch from near stem to reduce risk of disease and rodent injury.

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