

The American Cyclopædia — Cherry



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CHERRY. The common cherry tree (*prunus cerasus*, Linn.; *cerasus vulgaris*, Loud.) is of Asiatic origin, and is said by Pliny to have been introduced into Italy by Lucullus from Cerasus in Pontus during the Mithridatic war, about 70 B. C., and about 120 years afterward it was introduced into Britain.



Common Cherry.

It is extensively cultivated in the temperate regions of Europe and America. The Romans recognized eight varieties of it, and more than 300 varieties are now reckoned in catalogues. The branches are spreading, horizontal, or slightly inclining upward in the larger trees, and drooping in the smaller ones; the flowers are in subsessile umbels, somewhat stalked; the leaves are ovate-lanceolate, smooth, folded together, and of lightest color in the largest varieties; and the fruit is round or heart-shaped, commonly red, but passes into all shades between that color and dark purple. The wood is of a reddish hue, hard and tough, and much used by the cabinetmaker; the gum which exudes from the bark is edible; and the fruit is eaten either fresh or dried, and is made into preserves. The cherry tree is best propagated by grafting on seedlings of the wild cherry.



Wild Cherry (*Cerasus Virginiana*).

—The wild cherry tree (*Cerasus Virginiana*, Loud., and *Prunus serotina*, Ehrhart) is one of the largest American forest trees, sometimes attaining a height of 100 ft., with a trunk 3 or 4 ft. in diameter. It is found from Mexico to

Hudson bay, and abounds in the middle states, and in Kentucky and Ohio. Its wood is compact, fine-grained, and of a dull, light red tint, which deepens with age. It takes a brilliant polish, and is not likely to warp. It is employed by cabinetmakers for almost every species of furniture, and when selected near the ramification of the trunk it rivals mahogany in beauty. Where it abounds, it is used in ship building and for the fellies of wheels. The fruit is purplish black, slightly bitter, and is used for flavoring brandy. This tree is cultivated in Europe for ornament.—The choke cherry (*prunus Virginiana*, Linn.) has often been confounded by botanists with the preceding. It is a tall shrub, seldom a tree, with greenish bark, oblong, sharply serrate teeth, and red fruit, turning to dark crimson, and very astringent till perfectly ripe. It is common on river banks W. of the Alleghanies, and along the Atlantic parts of America, especially northward. Its bark is known to physicians as a tonic. Its fruit affords nourishment to birds, which are said to be sometimes affected by it with a sort of intoxication.—The *prunus avium* (Linn.), or *cerasus sylvestris* (Loud.), is the wild cherry tree of England and continental Europe, and in favorable situations acquires a height of 60 or 70 ft. in about 50 years. Its fruit is known in England by the name of *gean*, and is highly prized in France for the food it supplies to the poor. It is also used to make jelly and cherry brandy. Its wood is manufactured into furniture and musical instruments. Wine casks made of it are said to improve the flavor of wine kept in them.

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