

## Crab apple tree

**BOTANICAL NAME:** *Malus* spp.

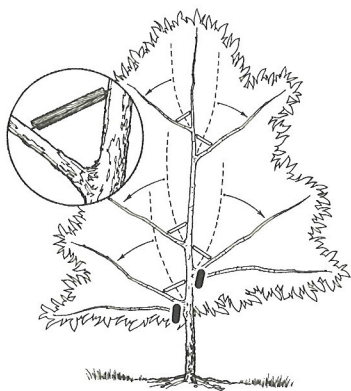
**PLANT TYPE:** Deciduous Tree

**SIZE:** Many different sizes from 15' tall and 10' wide to 25' × 15'. Size depends upon the variety of crab apple and the origin of rootstock.

**GROWING HABITS:** Commonly grows as a central leader. Seldom needs yearly pruning if disease-free. Flowers on spurs formed on two-year-old branches. Can be shaped to any form used for fruiting apple and pear trees—standard, delayed open-center, open-center, dwarf central leader, or any of the many espalier forms.

**TIME TO PRUNE:** Like fruit trees, spring heading cuts are used to encourage laterals and branches. Spring and summer pruning are used to remove any damaged or diseased shoots, branches, or limbs. Natural cascading of the shoots tends to form plenty of bloom without pruning.

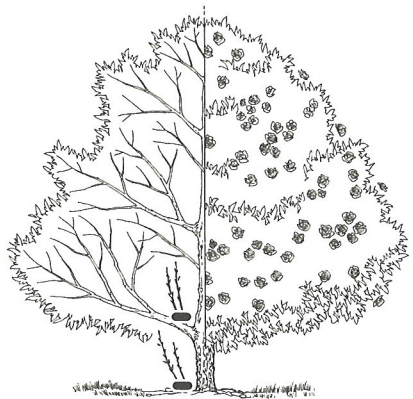
**NEW SHOOTS AFTER CUTTING BARE STEMS?** Sprouts readily from bare shoots, stems, branches, and limbs.



*Before: In early summer, use spreaders to push upright-growing shoots into 45° branching angles.*

**SPECIAL PRUNING POINTERS:** Watersprouts and suckers are especially troublesome with crab apple trees. Be sure to eliminate them with thinning cuts as soon as they're noticed. Be watchful for fire blight spreading down the shoot or limb. Cut back visibly damaged branches 12"–18" into healthy-looking growth. Sterilize pruners *after each cut* with a 10% bleach-and-water solution, 100% Lysol™, or 100% rubbing alcohol.

**STEP BY STEP:** 1. After planting, cut leader only if you want an open-center or delayed open-center shape. Clip as few shoots or branches as necessary for a healthy form. 2. By early summer, tie up the first shoot below the cut leader if you want a delayed open-center tree. Spread or tie down any vertical shoots for a wider tree. 3. In summer, remove any crossing shoots. Use thinning cuts to let more light into the crown or to remove watersprouts. Always remove suckers as soon as possible. When the tree reaches desired height, cut out the leader with a summer thinning cut.



*After: When shoots have become woody and adopt the proper branch angle, you can remove the spreaders.*