

Cercis canadensis

[Synonyms : *Cercis canadensis* var. *typica*, *Cercis occidentalis*]

REDBUD is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to eastern and central North America, it has small pea-like, pink (occasionally white or purple) flowers and leaves that turn yellow in Autumn.

It is also known as American Judas tree, Canadian Judas tree, Eastern redbud, Judas tree, June bud, North American redbud, Red Judas tree, Salad tree, and *Zmarlika kanadská* (Czech).

Canadensis means ‘of or from Canada or north-eastern North America’.

In the same way that northern Europeans welcome the sight of a snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*) as a messenger of Spring so, it is understood Kiowa North American Indians delighted in the appearance of redbud blossom.

Some North American tribes supplemented Winter fuel with redbud stems.

The fried flowers were a rare delicacy for Indian tribes living in Mexico. North American Cherokee children are also said to have eaten the blossoms. While records show that early settlers not only added the buds and flowers to salads but also pickled them.

Despite Kiowa appreciation of its beauty however, redbud is associated with negative superstition in North America for which reason there are some people who are still loathe to cut the tree either when it is flowering or after darkness has fallen. [No doubt it was this superstition that accounted for the upsurge of disquiet that arose when Oklahoma adopted redbud as the State flower in 1937. The Governor was inundated with telegrams of disapproval and, to this day, there are said to be some who still dislike the choice.]

Redbud provided medicine for some of the North American Indian tribes. A bark infusion was a remedy for whooping-cough for Cherokee Indians, and the Alabama tribe used the inner bark and roots to treat other lung ailments. Both the Alabama and Delaware tribes employed redbud to treat fever, and a bark infusion appears to have been a possible remedy among the latter for easing vomiting.

Medicinally, the tree was recommended by herbalists in local treatments for dysentery and diarrhoea.