

Cercis occidentalis/*C. canadensis* ‘Oklahoma’—Western Redbud

Among the early blooming trees on Victoria Avenue are the Redbuds (*Cercis spp.*), which are both delicate and spectacular in the spring. This genus is a member of the legume family (Fabaceae) and a number of species are used as ornamentals. The most commonly used species is *C. canadensis*, the Eastern redbud. A number of different varieties are known that vary in flower color, ‘*alba*’ (white), ‘*Oklahoma*’ (wine red) and ‘*Ruby Atkinson*’ (pink). Another species native to California, *C. occidentalis*, is also grown in the western US.

Redbuds are small to medium-sized trees with deciduous, heart-shaped leaves. Although their typical legume-type flowers are relatively small and delicate, they open before the new leaves expand and are arranged in such abundant, dense clusters all along the branches that the whole tree seems to be “wreathed in pink.” The flowers are followed by brown, bean-shaped pods or legumes. The heart-shaped, soft green leaves are attractive in the summer and turn color in the fall before dropping off the tree.

The Eastern Redbud has been cultivated since 1641. It is very hardy and grows in sun and shade, and tolerates a range of soils. It requires irrigation in Southern California, whereas *C. occidentalis* is excellent for dry, seldom-watered banks. Redbuds are attractive and graceful, small trees as either single specimens or in groupings.

They can be seen in the median of Victoria Avenue between Jackson and Gibson and between Central and Laramie.

