

## PLANT TNT



### Bang for \$: Cornelian cherry (*Cornus mas*)

- Year-round interest
- Forage and habitat for wildlife
- Easy care
- Full sun to moist shade
- Zones 4 to 7

**C**ornelian cherry (*Cornus mas*) is one of the earliest-blooming woody plants. It makes a deciduous shrub or small tree, with a graceful rounded form, 15 to 20 feet tall. In early spring, the naked branches are dotted with clusters of fluffy yellow flowers, which are followed in late summer by bright red edible fruits. While too tart to eat raw, these “cherries” make delicious preserves and are also relished by songbirds and other wildlife. In fall, the dark green foliage turns a rich burgundy purple, and the beautifully mottled exfoliating bark of mature specimens contributes to its four seasons of garden interest. Cornelian cherry grows in sun or shade, is tolerant of most conditions, and is untroubled by pests or disease. It’s particularly effective when trained as a multitrunked small tree and underplanted with hellebores, primroses, early bulbs, and other early spring border beauties, such as daffodils. *C. mas* ‘Variegata’ has white-margined foliage; ‘Aurea’ is strongly

### Save your ¢: Forsythia (*Forsythia × intermedia*)

- Spring interest only
- Rampant grower
- Requires careful pruning
- Full sun
- Zones 3 to 8

yellow; and with gold-margined leaves, the cultivar ‘Elegantissima’ is a stunning addition to the garden.

**Forsythia** (*F. × intermedia*) is often chosen for its vivid yellow flowers that seem to shout, “Spring is *here!*” But its popularity has made it all too commonplace, which means gardens are often left with dreary green holes in their planting schemes as the flowers fade, replaced by unremarkable foliage that has little fall—or wildlife—interest. Forsythia is hardy to Zone 3, though frost often kills the flowers, and will grow anywhere with wild abandon. Left unpruned, this nonnative shrub suckers to become an unruly dense thicket. Gardeners therefore often prune hard to keep it tidy, which unless done only after blooming removes most of the flowering wood for that season. Difficult to work into borders and mixed plantings because of its size and strident color, forsythia is used to edge parking lots. —Lorene Edwards Forkner