Cherries, Plums, and Laurels

Genus Characteristics

Leaves: Leaves are simple and alternately arranged, sometimes appearing whorled. Leaves often have a serrated margin and acuminate tip. *Prunus* is a large and diverse genus with many cultivars on the market, resulting in a variety of leaf shapes and colors. Many *Prunus* are susceptible to shothole fungus, which presents as holes in leaves.

Prunus cerasifera 'Atropurpurea'

Prunus serrulata

Fruit: Fruit forms throughout the summer after flowering. Many nursery cultivars are bred to be fruitless, so fruits may not be visible on every tree. When fruit is present, it is a drupe (fleshy fruit surrounding a stone pit). Plums, nectarines, peaches, and cherries are all examples of *Prunus* fruit.

Prunus laurocerasus

Prunus cerasifera 'Atropurpurea'

Bark: Bark varies depending on species. Cherries tend to have visible lenticels and glossy bark that may or may not peel. Plums tend to have ropy bark that gives the tree a twisted appearance. Bark can be a great clue to species identification.

Prunus serrula

Prunus cerasifera

Form: Trees can be small to medium form. Laurels are usually maintained as shrubs; we will only inventory those maintained as trees. Form can vary depending on cultivar and grafting. Crown is usually round. Cherries and plums are often as wide as they are tall.

Prunus serrulata

Prunus cerasifera

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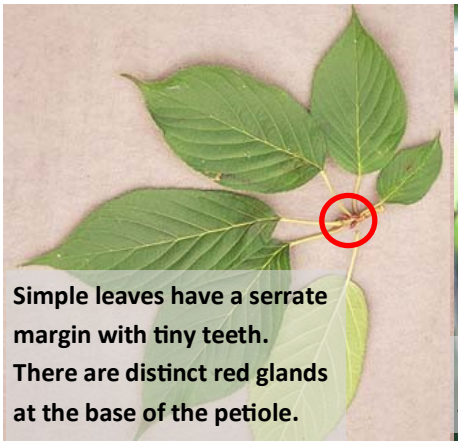
Prunus cerasifera—Purple flowering plum

Leaves are alternate with serrate margins and are glossy purple-red. Petioles are red with a red node where the petiole meets the branch.

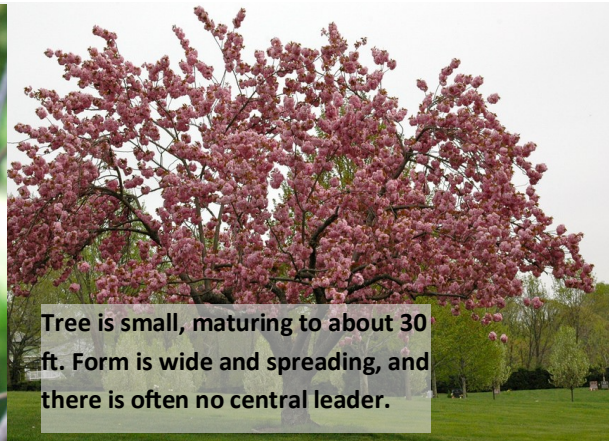
Form is broad and vase-shaped. Leaf coloration is distinctive at a distance.

Prunus serrulata—Japanese flowering cherry



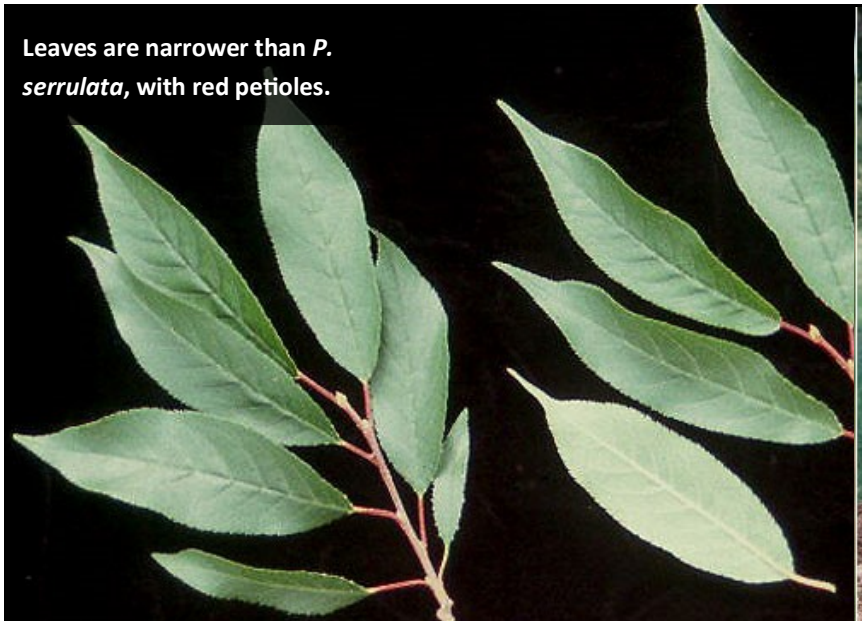
Simple leaves have a serrate margin with tiny teeth. There are distinct red glands at the base of the petiole.

Bark is grey, smooth, and glossy with horizontal lenticels.



Tree is small, maturing to about 30 ft. Form is wide and spreading, and there is often no central leader.

Prunus serrula—Tibetan cherry, Paperbark cherry



Leaves are narrower than *P. serrulata*, with red petioles.

Bark is red-bronze and very glossy. Bark peels as tree matures.

Prunus avium—Sweet cherry

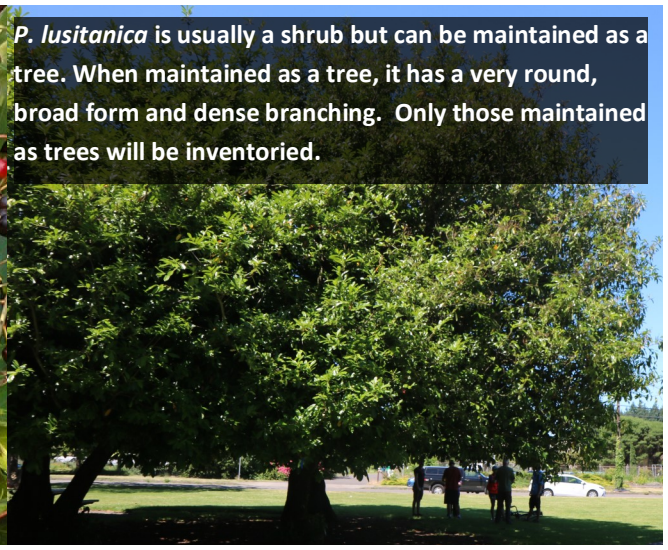
Red nodes are evident where leaf meets petiole, instead of where petiole meets twig.

Glossy bark peels and cracks with age.

Form is more upright than other cherries with a round crown.

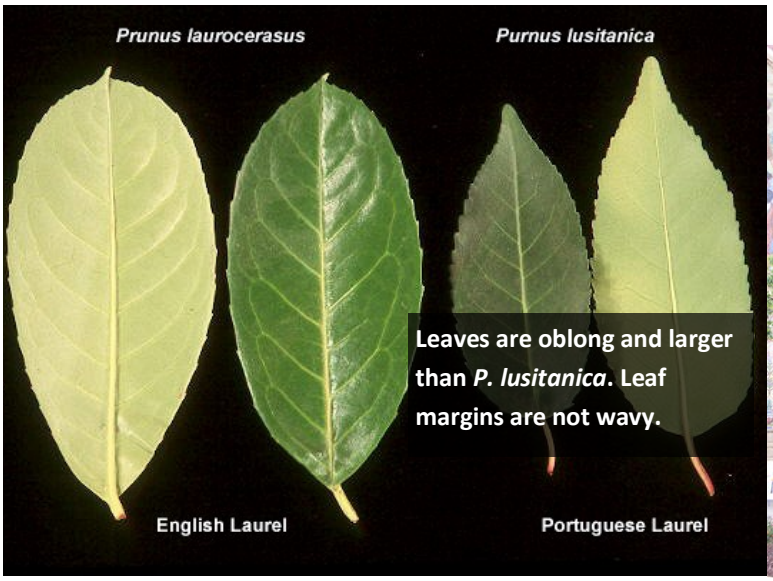
Prunus lustitanica—Portuguese laurel

Leaves are evergreen and waxy. Margin is serrate and wavy. Fruit is a small drupe that matures from red to purple-black.

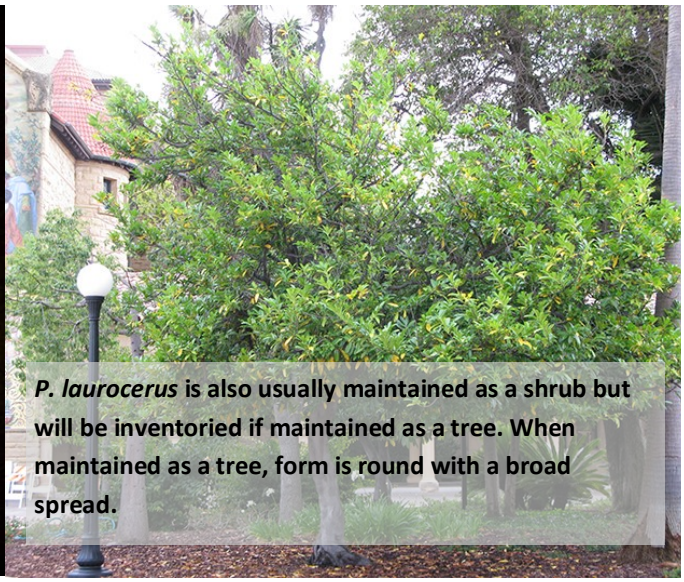


P. lusitanica is usually a shrub but can be maintained as a tree. When maintained as a tree, it has a very round, broad form and dense branching. Only those maintained as trees will be inventoried.

Prunus laurocerus—English cherry laurel



Leaves are oblong and larger than *P. lusitanica*. Leaf margins are not wavy.



P. laurocerus is also usually maintained as a shrub but will be inventoried if maintained as a tree. When maintained as a tree, form is round with a broad spread.