

Prunus cerasifera varieties

(Purpleleaf Plums)



Above: *Prunus cerasifera* 'Nigra' street trees.



Notes

Overused, boring blight or a pleasing contrast to the normal green tones? Subjectivity aside, the densely compact, dark foliated 'Nigra' or the fastigate form of 'Oakville Crimson Sentry' are perennial favourites and have a place in urban landscapes.

Above: The single pink flowers of 'Nigra'.

Origin	According to Jacobson (1992), the origin of 'Nigra' is ambiguous. The 'Oakville Crimson Sentry' cultivar was selected in Sydney by Vic Ciccolella at his property called Oakville.
Habit	Small sized deciduous trees; both cultivars reaching 6 metres in height at maturity. 'Nigra' has dense, ascending branches that forms a rounded canopy of a similar width to the height. 'Oakville Crimson Sentry' has a compact, fastigate habit which is 2 to 3m in width. Moderate to fast growth rate.
Description	Leaves simple, elliptic to ovate and slightly acuminate with serrated margins. Deep red-purple with 'Nigra' to reddish-bronze in 'Oakville Crimson Sentry'. Bark is dark-grey, rough and becoming slightly furrowed with age. 'Nigra' has single petalled pink flowers and 'Oakville Crimson Sentry' has white flowers. Both cultivars hold their flowers in clusters that appear with the foliage in late winter to early spring.
Tolerances	Both cultivars tolerate a range of soil types, they are highly tolerant of frost and moderately tolerant of drought. Purple-leaved Cherry-plum has a low tolerance of compaction, waterlogging and aerial salt. It may also be prone to boring insects during later stages of maturity. Pear and Cherry Slug can also infest the foliage.
Root space	Based on a mature size specimen of 'Nigra' would require approximately 20m ² area or 12m ³ root volume (crown projection method).
Availability	Common; bare-root, container and advanced stock.
Uses & management	Some cultivars have been overused in the past, particularly in some streets at the expense of larger, longer lived species. These small statured ornamental flowering trees do however provide good foliage contrast and their size lends them to certain landscape uses. These trees are suitable for smaller urban landscapes, parks and streets, particularly under powerlines. 'Oakville Crimson Sentry' would be useful for screening or where horizontal space is restricted. Generally considered short to moderate-lived (50-100 years), small sized trees with ornamental characteristics and good tolerances. Easy to transplant. Prefer full sun position. Low litter problem. Fruit (plums) are sparse on both cultivars.



Above: P. c. 'Oakville Crimson Sentry' as a street tree.

Reference

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