

Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

Get a Free Replacement Tree for Your Callery Pear

You may have heard about invasive pear trees that are posing a threat to biodiversity. You may even have one in your own backyard. These trees pose threats to pollinators, biodiversity, buildings, and even people.

The best thing to do with a Callery pear, as any state agency or conservationist will tell you, is to cut them down. While you may be hesitant to lose your shade tree, there are buy back programs that will help you replace the tree at no cost.

Callery pears, which are native to China, were once touted as fast-growing, beautiful ornamental trees, great for city parks, lawns, and street trees across America. For a short period, each spring, these trees put on a deceptive show, flaunting beautiful white flowers that can draw in onlookers. But make no mistake – these trees are no longer welcome in Kansas.

There are multiple cultivars of Callery pears in Kansas and Missouri that are raising concern among conservationists. One of the most common is the Bradford pear. These trees are spreading at an alarming rate, snuffing out other native trees and plants.

Beyond destroying biodiversity, they are harming our pollinator populations. Despite their beautiful flowers, they do not support any of our native pollinators. When these flowers start emerging in early spring, they block out critical sunlight for our native wildflowers, further reducing pollinator habitat.

In cityscapes or backyards, they pose another threat: property damage. Its' egg-shaped structure and brittle wood mean they are a fall hazard. Their limbs generally have weak unions with the trunk, and falling limbs are incredibly common. They can reach heights of 30 to 40 feet, posing serious threats to surrounding structures and people.

If you are looking at your Callery pear tree and admiring the shade and beauty it brings to your yard, we can help ease the pain of losing your tree. Deep Roots KC, in collaboration with other local organizations and sponsors, offers Callery pear buy back events. If you cut down a Callery pear, take a picture with it, and register for one of the Buy Back events, you can get a free native tree to replace it.

There is an upcoming Buy Back event in Shawnee County on April 27th. To register, or see other dates and locations, visit deeproofs.org/callery-pear-events.