

My 'Wouldn't be Without' Plant

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One of my (several!) wouldn't be without plants is a small tree, a beautiful crab apple *Malus* 'Butterball'. In terms of overall shape, it is described as having slightly drooping branches, although you could describe the one we have growing in our garden as properly weeping.

We planted it about 8 years ago, and since then it has reached a height of 5 feet and a width of 3.5 feet.



In spring the blossom literally covers every branch - pink buds opening to single white flowers with a pale pink flush. It is absolutely stunning.

As spring turns to summer the large crab apples swell and turn golden yellow with splashes of red. Caught in the early evening sun as it sets over the ridge beyond our garden, they are just magnificent. The fruits deepen in colour as the year progresses, and it puts on a truly fiery display in late autumn before shedding its leaves.



Although the fruits are good to eat we prefer to leave them on the tree. By winter we would consider the fruit to be rotten although they still have a beauty to them even then – and this is when the blackbirds and thrushes come to feast – they gather round the base of the tree and jump up into the branches to knock the fruit off so that they can then tuck into them on the ground.

So there you have it – one small deciduous tree, four seasons of beauty, and entertainment in the winter. What more could you ask of a plant?