



# Township of Bernards Shade Tree Commission

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## **The Bradford Pear (*Pyrus calleryana*)**

The Bradford pear (*Pyrus calleryana*) is the prolific white blooming tree that everyone notices in May. There are hundreds of them at the Northwest corner of Mt. Airy and Allen roads. The tree is native to China and has been widely planted as a street tree in towns, cities, and in industrial settings. The wide acceptance of the Callery pear is due to its dependable bloom every year. It is well known for its adaptability to infertile and acidic soil, tolerance to wide variations in moisture levels, and it is very disease resistant.

However, there are many downsides of the tree that has led to a decrease in its use in any landscape. It has a poor branch structure and is prone to wind damage even at 40 mph that other trees can withstand. The average lifespan of the Bradford pear is perhaps only 25 years. The removal of large limbs or the complete removal of the tree has become expensive for towns and municipalities who have planted them along their roadways. Some landscape designers still specify the tree because it is produced inexpensively due its rapid growth rate. Ethical nurseries do not recommend Bradford pear trees and many no longer sell them.

It has become a nuisance tree because of its invasiveness. The tree fruits are round, hard, and 1 cm in diameter. When cold weather arrives the fruits soften and are eaten by birds. The seeds are widely distributed in nearby areas. This explains the proliferation of Bradford pear in the above location.

While the white blossoms of the Bradford pear are attractive, the close up experience is not very satisfactory. The principal fragrance of the blossoms is that of dead fish. One may notice a second background scent that is more pleasant. Fortunately the odor is not always intense and doesn't spread over a wide distance. Due to its many detrimental factors the Shade Tree Commission does not recommend planting Bradford pear.