

Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*)

Flowering dogwood is native to the southeastern United States. The showy blossoms and attractive fall foliage make flowering dogwood a valuable ornamental species.

Flowering dogwood is a small deciduous tree, characterized by branches that spread wider than its height. Flowering dogwood is typically 15 to 45 ft. tall.

Leaves are opposite, simple, medium-green in color, 3 to 5 in. long, and less than 3 in wide. The veins follow the oval curve of the leaf. Autumn foliage turns red or purple.

The flowers are yellow, very small, and clustered in the center of 4 large white (or pink) bracts. Each bract has a rounded notch on the outer edge. Flowers appear between March and June, with or before the leaves, and persist for 2 to 4 weeks.

The fruit are yellow to red berrylike drupes that contain one to two cream-colored, oval seeds. Fruits ripen in September and October. The fruit of flowering dogwood is poisonous to humans.

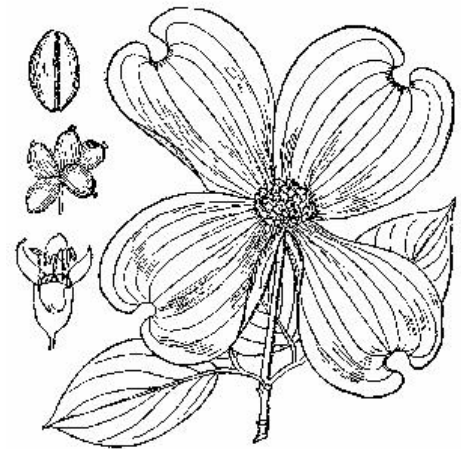
Flowering dogwood is an important understory species in the eastern deciduous and southern coniferous forests. It is also found on floodplains, slopes, bluffs, ravines, gum swamps, along fencerows, and in old-field communities.

Partial or broken shade is best, but flowering dogwood can tolerate full sun. It does best with some shade in the south and full sun in the north.

Flowering dogwood trees grow best in coarse to medium textured, well-drained soils with a pH range of 6 to 7. They are sensitive to rapidly changing soil temperature and are most abundant in temperature-consistent woodland soils.

Although they are tolerant of seasonal dry periods, they are not tolerant of severe drought or heavy, saturated soils. The inability to grow on extremely dry sites is attributed to their shallow root system.

Flowering dogwood is not tolerant of stresses such as heat, drought, pollution, or salt. These stresses make flowering dogwood more susceptible to disease, pests, and other problems.



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Source: USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. Illustrated flora of the northern states and Canada. Vol. 2:664.