



Township of Bernards Shade Tree Commission

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The Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)

Two types of dogwoods have been planted in our area. One, the flowering dogwood, (*Cornus florida*) is native to the U. S. and grows in nearby woods. The other is the Kousa dogwood that is native to Asia. Only a few native dogwoods have been planted over the last 40 years for good reason. Over 50 years ago dogwoods in both gardens and the forests began to die from a disease that could not be readily diagnosed or cured so alternative similar trees were used in their place. Among these were dogwood that were found to be disease resistant and those made from crosses between our native dogwood and Kousa dogwood.

Native dogwoods grow in every East coast state and in some areas of the Midwest to Texas. They bloom in May after the cherries, apples, and magnolias. Trees along roadways at the edge the forest will bloom on the side receiving sunlight. Others growing in the woods show no or very little bloom. The actual flower is very small; the 'bloom' that we see consists of four white flower bracts. The native dogwood has rounded biscuit shaped flower buds while the Kousa dogwood's buds are pointed; this helps to quickly determine the species. Trees in nature and in gardens have a unique branching structure and grow to be 30 feet high but not as wide. The red fruit appears in the late summer to fall, is slightly ovoid and about 12 mm in diameter. It is eaten by many birds that effectively distribute the seeds. The leaves turn to a rich red to maroon-red in the fall.

There are many variants of the flowering dogwood including pink to nearly red blooming ones as well as slower growing types. In all this native medium-sized deciduous tree has a nice feel in the garden and seems appropriate for ones that are more naturalistic and less formal. Now that superior and disease resistant forms are available the flowering dogwood may now once again be used in the landscape.