

Grey Dogwood

Many species of dogwood are available in North America for use in the landscape. *Cornus racemosa*, the grey dogwood, is particularly useful. The many interesting cultivars of *Cornus racemosa* have their own delightful characteristics and applications.

Habit

Cornus racemosa is a multi-stemmed shrub. The stems are erect but spread near the apex, or crown, of the shrub. This shrub reaches a height of 2.5 to 3 m when mature. The spread through young stems is infinite due to the suckering nature of the shrub. Some cultivars of *Cornus racemosa* have a tree-form habit.

Habitat

Cornus racemosa is found all over North America although growth in the north stops beyond zone 4. It is a very adaptable shrub capable of growing in soils ranging from dry clay to wet loam.

Also, it will grow in a variety of light conditions ranging from full sun to full shade. *Cornus racemosa* does best in well-drained sandy loam with moderate lighting.

Care

Requiring little care to maintain optimal health, *Cornus racemosa* has no serious disease or insect problems. In spite of this, it should be monitored for sawfly larvae. The sawfly attacks early in the summer and has the ability to completely defoliate *Cornus racemosa* in a couple of days.

Cultivars

Two cultivars of *Cornus racemosa* are worth noting for their habit.

Cornus racemosa 'Cinderella' has a spread and height of 4.5 m. The foliage has a dark-green center surrounded by grey-green with yellow margins.

Cornus racemosa 'Hurzam' is a compact dogwood reaching a height of 90 to 120 cm. New foliage is reddish.

Interest

A shrub that can be grown to suit and fulfil a variety of needs and wishes, *Cornus racemosa* is versatile in the landscape. It can be planted in groups for massing. Also, it can be planted in a border as an accent, privacy screen, security barrier or backdrop. *Cornus racemosa* can also be used for naturalization and stream-bank stabilization.

Beautiful, small, white flowers appear in the spring. These are followed by white berries similar in size. These berries are not edible for humans but will not harm wildlife. The berries fall off during fall. The pink-red peduncles (berry stalks) persist throughout the winter. The peduncles, bark and upright stems make a wonderful winter habit.

Cornus racemosa requires minimal care and has many utilitarian uses. It attracts, feeds and shelters a variety of wildlife. *Cornus racemosa* is a good choice for both the weekend gardener and the seasoned professional.

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