

# Pagoda dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*)

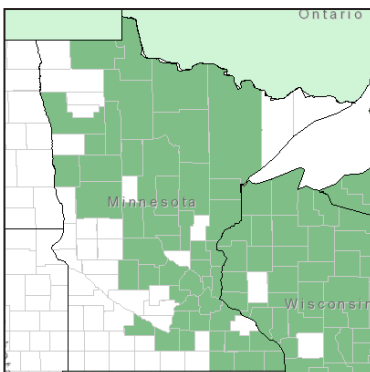
## Family: Dogwood (*Cornaceae*)

**DESCRIPTION:** An attractive flowering shrub or small understory tree common in hardwood and mixed forests, pagoda dogwood grows 12 to 25 feet tall and up to 25 feet wide. Its name comes from the tiered, horizontal branching said to resemble a pagoda.

**USES:** Common as a multi-stemmed ornamental landscaping shrub, pagoda dogwood can be pruned to a one-trunk tree. Its horizontal branches can provide an architectural appearance and focal point in gardens. Birds and pollinators feed on the fruit and flowers; branches provide shelter for nesting.

### REFERENCES:

[Minnesota Wildflowers](#)  
[Iowa State University Natural Resource Stewardship](#)  
[University of Kentucky](#)  
[USDA NRCS Plants Database](#)  
[University of Minnesota Extension](#)



Range Map Credit: NRCS Plants Database



Photo Credit: David Hanson

**STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS:** FACU, FAC

**ID:** Pagoda dogwood is the only *Cornus* species in Minnesota with alternate leaves. They're oval, and up to 4 inches long. Young specimens' green, smooth bark turns a reddish-brown with age. Creamy white, four-petaled flowers grow in clusters. Dark blue drupes ripen in late summer. Roots are fibrous and spreading.

**SIMILAR SPECIES:** Gray, red-osier, silky and red-osier and round-leaved dogwoods have opposite leaves while pagoda dogwood has alternate leaves. The branches of round-leaved dogwood are more upright.

## Planting Recommendations

Most commonly sold in containers or as a bare-root plant, pagoda dogwood prefers medium-textured, moist, acidic, loamy soil and shade, but will tolerate full sun. It has low drought tolerance but does well in cold climates. Consider planting on the north or east side of a building for part-shade. Pagoda dogwood can self-seed. Like other dogwoods, it can be propagated from stem

cuttings. Consider planting wild geranium, Jacob's ladder, wild ginger or Pennsylvania sedge under these small trees. Rich soils and protection from weather extremes boost pagoda dogwood's resistance to golden canker, a common disease of the species caused by a fungus that can kill part of the plant. Pruning and then burying or burning infected, discolored branches curbs the canker's spread.

### Developed by Calista Hughes

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