

Trees That Lighten Your Day

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Flowering Dogwood. *Cornus florida* 'Rosea' and *Cornus florida* 'Rubra'



Cornus florida is native to the eastern and central United States and is winter hardy to Zone 5. Flowering dogwood grows naturally as an understory tree to about 30' tall with an equal or greater spread. Generally, branching is approaching horizontal with branches low to the ground on a short trunk. Like Redbud, it blooms for a two-week period before leafing out. Flowering dogwood blooms in mid-May. The cultivars 'Rosea' and 'Rubra' describe flower coloration. 'Rubra' has flowers that range from pink to reddish with considerable variation in color and is very commonly available in local nurseries.

Redbud is part of the pea (Fabaceae) which relates it to legumes. It produces pea-pod like fruit containing viable seed at the end of the season. Legumes are plants that create nitrogen food in the soil, to the benefit of many other plants. Flowering dogwood produces its best form and flowers in light shade. Its bright red fruit, ripening in September, attracts many varieties of birds. Use mulch to maintain moist soil in a 6' diameter ring around the trunk. Do not pile mulch onto the trunk, but rather provide a clear area near the soil at the base of the tree.



The flowers are in the center of four (4) white or pink bracts, which is the part we revel in. The actual flowers that produce the fruit are small and yellowish-green. The white bracts surrounding the flower clusters are unmistakable and very showy in mid-April. Flowering dogwood is the North Carolina state flower.



Leaves appear after the flowers fade and are medium green all season until the first touch of frost. In fall, then they turn a reddish-purple adding yet another facet to the glory of this tree.

Naturally an understory tree, Flowering Dogwood is a natural addition to the spring chain of flowering trees, following Redbud and Serviceberry. It grows in a variety of habitats throughout its range, but generally occurs on fertile, well drained but moist sites.