

SWAMP DOGWOOD

Cornus foemina P. Mill.

Plant Symbol = COFO

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program



Robert H. Mohlenbrock
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Midwestern Wetland Flora
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Uses

Wildlife: Fruits are eaten by several species of birds including quail, catbirds, mockingbirds, robins, and brown thrashers.

Recreation and Beautification: Excellent landscape tree for its very attractive form and profuse white flowers. Frequently used for massing or naturalizing, screen and border.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description

Cornus foemina P. Mill., swamp dogwood, is primarily found along the coastal plain from eastern Virginia to central Florida, west to Louisiana and north to southeastern Missouri. It is a deciduous small tree to large shrub, growing to 15 ft in height, with multiple trunks, 4 inches in diameter. Its bark is thick and smooth, frequently furrowed with shallow ridges exposing gray inner bark. The plant's leaves are opposite and oval-shaped, with smooth margins. Flowers are creamy white, loose, and small; they occur in flat topped clusters without showy bracts. Fruits are small, open clusters of bluish to purple drupes (fleshy, one-seeded fruits).

Adaptation and Distribution

Swamp dogwood generally grows in swampy, low wetland habitats, barrier islands, and along streams, riverbanks, marshes and creeks. It is found growing along ditches on the second road back from the ocean at Emerald Isle and found to exhibit moderate salt tolerance.

Swamp dogwood is distributed throughout most of the southeast United States. For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

Establishment

Like most dogwoods, this species can be grown easily from seeds collected from mature, native trees and from softwood cuttings. Seeds at maturity must be either planted immediately or prechilled. Seeds sown in nursery beds should be covered with ¼ to ½ inch of soil and mulched during the winter.

Management

Plant in moist soils in full sun to partial shade as it is tolerant to wet and/or low fertility soils. It requires little maintenance in naturalized settings. When used for massing, pruning to within a few inches of the ground every few years promotes fullness.

Pests and Potential Problems

This plant has no serious insects and diseases except occasional infestation by scale insects and leaf spot.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

None recommended. Plants are not readily available from nurseries.

Prepared By & Species Coordinator:
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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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