

## SILKY DOGWOOD

*Cornus amomum* Mill.

Plant Symbol = COAM2

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program



Robert H. Mohlenbrock  
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Southern Wetland Flora  
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### Alternate Names

*Swida amomum* (P. Mill.) Small

### Uses

The primary use of this species is for field and farmstead windbreaks and wildlife borders. It is also being used with willows for streambank protection. Other beneficial uses are for fish and wildlife habitat improvement, slope stabilization, borders, and as an ornamental.

### 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

Silky dogwood is a large shrub, often 6-10 feet in height. The growth habit is upright rounded, but where stems are in contact with the ground, roots are formed. This behavior creates thickets. Young dogwoods have bright red stems in the fall, winter and early spring, which turn reddish-brown in the summer. As the shrub matures, the stems turn reddish-brown year-round and later gray. Silky and redosier dogwood, though very similar, can be distinguished by their pith and fruit color. Silky dogwood has a brown pith in 1-2 year old stems, dark green ovate leaves, yellowish-white flowers which bloom in mid-June, and bluish colored fruit which matures in September. Redosier dogwood has a white pith, dark green ovate leaves, white flowers, and whitish colored fruit. There are approximately 12,000 seeds per pound.

### Adaptation and Distribution

Silky dogwood is adapted from Michigan and Wisconsin to Maine and south to Georgia, Florida, and Tennessee. It has done exceptionally well in the Lake states, but poorly outside its natural range. It performs best in soils that are moist, somewhat poorly drained, moderately acidic to neutral, and in areas that have medium to coarse soils. It is highly tolerant of shade but not of droughty conditions.

For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

### Establishment

**Windbreaks:** The site must be prepared by reducing weed competition. If equipment can be used, plow or disc the site first. If equipment cannot be used, clear sod from a one foot square area and plant as soon as frost is gone in the Spring. For bare root plants, holes should be dug deep enough to accommodate the entire root system. Space plants 5-6 feet apart in a row. If planting in a cluster, 8x10 or 10x10 foot spacing is advisable.

**Streambank stabilization:** Steep slopes must first be graded. The slope should be 1:1 or flatter. Any trees considered unstable should be removed. One year old rooted cuttings should be used for planting. Plant in early spring, preferably before May. Do not plant after June 1. Plant the cuttings two feet apart for streambank erosion control, four to six feet apart for wildlife habitat. Establishment with other species,

such as willow and other riparian species, is a good practice. On sites with banks that may become dry over the summer, utilize silky dogwood next to the water, with willows above. Immediately after planting, grasses and legumes may be planted to provide initial stabilization. After 2 or 3 years the dogwoods will become effective. Silky dogwood is vulnerable to livestock browsing. In order to ensure survival, fencing must be incorporated into the plan. Rooted hardwood cuttings are taken in January, allowed to develop callus in refrigerated storage, and planted in mid-May in well drained soil 2 inches apart. The cuttings should be 1/4-1/2 inch in diameter and 9 to 12 inches long. They should be planted with approximately 2 inches exposed above ground level.

### **Management**

The planted areas should be examined each spring after the major runoff period has ended. Areas where vegetation has been destroyed must be immediately replaced with new plants. If any mechanical measures are being used to prevent erosion, they must also be maintained to prevent any more damage.

### **Pests and Potential Problems**

'Indigo' silky dogwood has few problems with disease or insect pests. Webworm and scurfy scale have been observed. There has been some problem with cicadas stinging the stems. Lesions and cankers may also occur. However, these are not pathogenic and are thought to just be the tree's reaction to injury.

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

'Indigo' (MI) silky dogwood was released in 1982 from the Rose Lake, Michigan Plant Materials Center in cooperation with the MI Department of Natural Resources.

### **Prepared By & Species Coordinator:**

*USDA NRCS Northeast Plant Materials Program*

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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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