

## Description

Flowering dogwoods (*Cornus florida*) are deciduous trees native to the eastern half of the United States. These trees can add year-round beauty to the landscape. Let's look at how to grow dogwood trees. Flowering dogwoods range in color from white to pink or red and generally bloom for about two to four weeks in early spring. They also add summer and fall color, with rich green foliage color in summer and reddish purple leaves during fall. This is oftentimes followed by brilliant red berries in winter. Proper dogwood care will bring these lovely trees to their height of beauty.

## Dogwood Information

In their natural habitat, dogwoods are understory trees, which are generally surrounded or protected by other larger trees. Therefore, when caring for dogwood trees, this should be considered carefully before placement in the landscape. Locating these trees on the edge of wooded areas or in groups is oftentimes more suitable to their natural surroundings. They can also be used as a backdrop for azaleas or other spring-flowering shrubs. Flowering dogwoods can be grown in sun or shade; however, trees planted in partial shade generally perform better. Trees planted in full sun can be stressful, making them more susceptible to dogwood borers and heat stress. For care of flowering dogwood trees, dogwoods that are planted in full sun must also rely on frequent watering, especially during hot conditions. While dogwoods will grow in a variety of climates and soil conditions, they typically grow best in, and even prefer, well-drained, humus-rich soil that is slightly acidic.

## Growing From Seed

When you are starting dogwood seed propagation, you'll need to soak the seeds in water for a couple of days. All non-viable seeds will float to the top of the water and should be removed. Soaking makes it a snap to remove the external pulp, expediting dogwood seed germination. You can rub the pulp off by hand or, if necessary, by using a fine wire screen. As soon as the soaking and pulp removal is done, it is time to plant. Prepare a seedbed with well-draining soil, or a flat with well-draining medium. For best dogwood seed germination, plant each seed about .5 inches (1.25 cm.) deep and 1 inch (2.5 cm.) apart in rows 6 inches (15 cm.) apart. Cover up the planted soil with light compost like pine straw to hold in moisture. Propagating dogwoods from seed isn't an overnight event. It takes time before you witness dogwood seed germination, and you'll usually see the new seedlings appear in spring following an autumn sowing.

# How to Care for Dogwood Trees

Most dogwoods require supplemental water during summer and fall, especially during hot, dry spells. For care of flowering dogwood trees, regular watering once a week to a depth of 6 inches should suffice. However, adding a generous layer of mulch will help retain moisture, minimizing watering chores. Most established trees do not require fertilizer. However, if you do choose to fertilize young dogwoods, use only a small amount of slow-release fertilizer. Dogwood trees seldom need pruning; however, it may be necessary to remove dead or injured branches, suckers, and diseased or insect-infested parts on occasion. Shaping trees may also help keep them more attractive looking. Flowering dogwood trees are considered “bleeders,” which means they bleed sap, if pruned during late winter. Summer is an ideal time to take care of any pruning tasks that may be needed since these plants do not bleed sap during this time. Once established in the landscape, caring for dogwood trees is relatively easy. As long as they have been planted in the proper conditions and location, the overall care of flowering dogwoods is minimal.