



***Cornus stolonifera* Red-osier Dogwood** (also known as *Cornus sericea*)

Range

Native range extends over much of North America, except southeastern and lower midwestern states; from Newfoundland to Manitoba, south to the central United States. It is even found on the west coast of the United States and down into the mountains of Arizona and New Mexico.

Climate, elevation

Valley bottoms to middle elevations (below 2500 m); Very adaptable to a wide range of soil and climatic conditions. Southern limits appear to be determined by high temperatures.

Local occurrence (where, how common)

Cornus stolonifera var. *occidentalis* is the form common to the Northwest. This is sometimes listed as *Cornus occidentalis*.

Habitat preferences

Moist, well-drained soils; Full sun to partial shade; Tolerates seasonal flooding; Found along stream banks and in open forested swamps; seems to prefer wetland margins where soils are nitrogen-rich, saturated, and shallowly inundated in the spring, and may be completely dry by late summer; Can live in upland open forests and rocky slopes.

Plant strategy type/successional stage (stress-tolerator, competitor, weedy/colonizer, seral, late successional)

An early to mid successional species that is suppressed in shade and is not normally found in the understory of closed canopy forests. It is found in the understory of mixed open forests; often one of the first shrubs to invade wet meadows.

Associated species

The plants most closely associated with red-osier dogwood

are willows and alders (*Alnus* spp.). Other plants frequently found with red-osier dogwood include cottonwoods, aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), birch (*Betula* spp.), Wood's rose (*Rosa woodsii*), gooseberries (*Ribes* spp.), hawthorne (*Crataegus* spp.), horsetails (*Equisetum* spp.), thistle (*Cirsium* spp.), and Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*).

May be collected as: (seed, layered, divisions, etc.)

Easiest to propagate from cuttings, including live stakes. Can be propagated by seed and layering also, but cuttings are preferred.

Collection restrictions or guidelines

Cuttings taken in the spring (1 year old wood) should be collected and planted before buds start to open and will root readily, providing sufficient moisture is available; cuttings should be about 18 inches long and at least 3/8-inches in diameter at the small end. Seeds can be collected August to October.

Seed germination (needs dormancy breaking?)

Plant the whole berries (no need to clean them); some of the seeds will germinate soon after sowing, and the rest will germinate the following spring. Seeds have dormant embryos and need cold stratification for 1-3 months. Occasionally, hard seed coats require scarification.

Seed life (can be stored, short shelf-life, long shelf-life)

See below

Recommended seed storage conditions

Seed will remain viable in cold storage 4-8 years.

Propagation recommendations (plant seeds, vegetative parts, cuttings, etc.)

Hardwood cuttings are preferred. Can also be propagated by layering and grown from seed. Transplant seedlings or rooted cuttings before roots grow too large.

Soil or medium requirements (inoculum necessary?)

Cuttings root easily without treatment and can be directly planted providing sufficient moisture is available.

Installation form (form, potential for successful outcomes, cost)

Live stake cuttings are easiest to propagate and most successful.

Recommended planting density

8-10 ft. centers.

Care requirements after installed (water weekly, water once etc.)

Cuttings must be well-watered over the summer. Competing vegetation should be controlled

until cuttings become established.

Normal rate of growth or spread; lifespan

Grows to 15-20 feet tall, spreading to 10 ft.

Sources cited

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Data compiled by Mike Cooksey, 22 April 2003