

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 it's 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

Edited: 01Feb2002 JLK; 25may06jsp

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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United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Plant Materials Program

'Indigo'

Silky Dogwood

Cornus amomum Mill

A Conservation Plant Release by USDA NRCS Rose Lake Plant Materials Center, East Lansing, MI



'Indigo' Silky Dogwood in bloom

The USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service, Rose Lake Plant Materials Center and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources released the cultivar 'Indigo' Silky Dogwood in 1982.

Description

'Indigo' is a spreading shrub that can grow up to 10 feet tall. The stems are red when young but turn reddish brown and gray as they mature. 'Indigo' has yellowish-white flowers that bloom in mid June. It produces an abundant crop of fruit, which ripens in September. The fruit is pale to dark blue and about ¼ inch in diameter. 'Indigo' can be distinguished from other blue fruited species of dogwood by the dark brown pith in one and two year old stems. In other blue fruited dogwoods, the pith is white.



'Indigo' Silky Dogwood berries

Source

'Indigo' silky dogwood seed was first collected in 1961 from plants at the Rose Lake Wildlife Research Station in Clinton County, Michigan. 'Indigo' has been evaluated in 20 states, particularly in the Great Lakes States, where it has performed well.

Conservation Uses

'Indigo' silky dogwood is a dense, multi-stemmed woody plant. It is especially useful for single row windbreaks in fields with center pivot irrigation systems because it grows low enough that the spray bar can pass over it. 'Indigo' can also be used in multi-row field windbreaks and farmstead windbreaks.

Stems and leaves of 'Indigo' are desirable deer browse, and the fruit is eaten by upland game birds and many songbirds. 'Indigo' is also useful for beautification and landscaping.

Area of Adaptation and Use

'Indigo' is adapted to a wide range of soils and soil textures, but it grows best in moist soil. It is adapted to soils that are somewhat poorly drained to well drained and have a pH of 5.0 to 7.0. It is moderately shade tolerant but is not drought tolerant.

Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings

Establish plantings of 'Indigo' from seedlings. Two year old seedlings are suitable for mechanical planting. One year old seedlings can be planted by hand, although survival may be low because of their small root system.

Follow the planting date and spacing recommendation for shrubs in your area. Space the plants no more than six feet apart. If planted much later than the recommended planting date, their establishment may be poor unless a moist site is chosen or supplemental water is applied.

To ensure establishment, control weeds mechanically for the first few years. Once 'Indigo' is established, you can use approved herbicides for effective weed control. Be sure to follow manufacturers directions carefully. Consult Extension personnel for help in selecting herbicides.

Ecological Considerations

No serious diseases have been observed on 'Indigo' Silky Dogwood plantings. Occasionally there has been an occurrence of webworm attacks.

An infestation of scurfy scale has been observed on some of the plants. The insect can be controlled with a dormant spray or with contact spray when the crawlers emerge in the spring.

In some cases, deer browse damage may temporarily retard the growth of this plant, especially when the browsing of succulent new growth appears. Where plantings are made in grass and cover, rodent damage may occur in the winter.

Seed and Plant Production

Harvest berries in September after they have turned dark blue and soft to the touch. Seeds can be separated from berry with a blender or similar equipment. Seed should be allowed to dry and further cleaned with a fanning mill.

'Indigo' seed benefits from a 12 week stratification treatment to speed germination. Germination of non-stratified seed takes several months longer to complete than stratified seed. 'Indigo' can also be propagated vegetatively. Dormant cuttings 1/4"-1/2" thick and 12-24" long can be placed vertically in the soil with 2/3 of the cutting underground and the remainder above ground. Root and shoot formation will occur within a few weeks as weather conditions permit.

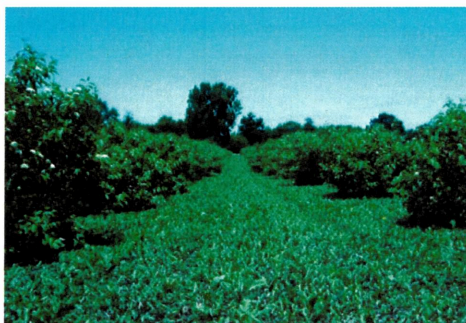


'Indigo' Silky Dogwood in bloom

Citation

Release Brochure for 'Indigo' Silky Dogwood, *Cornus amomum*, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rose Lake Plant Materials Center, East Lansing, MI 48823, October 1982. Revised January, 2012.

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Row of 'Indigo' Silky dogwood

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