



# *Cornus controversa* Giant Dogwood<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Giant Dogwood, a fast-growing deciduous tree that reaches 30 to 50 feet in height, eventually displays attractive horizontal branches clothed in large, five to eight-inch-long leaves, dark green above and silver/green beneath, which turn a lovely red color in the fall (Fig. 1). In the middle of springtime, the trees produce a multitude of flat, white clusters of bloom in dense cymes up to five inches across. These blooms are followed by showy, blue/black berries which are quite attractive to birds and other wildlife. The branching pattern is more upright in youth, spreading as it grows.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Cornus controversa*

**Pronunciation:** KOR-nus kawn-troe-VER-suh

**Common name(s):** Giant Dogwood

**Family:** *Cornaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5 through 8A (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); near a deck or patio; shade tree; narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

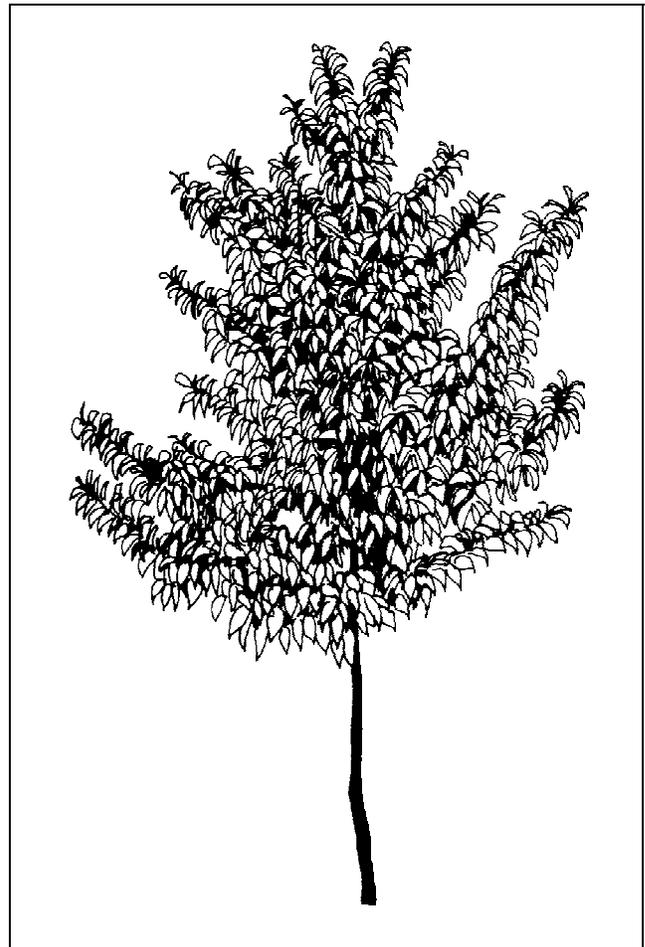


Figure 1. Young Giant Dogwood.

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 30 to 50 feet

**Spread:** 25 to 35 feet

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-183, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
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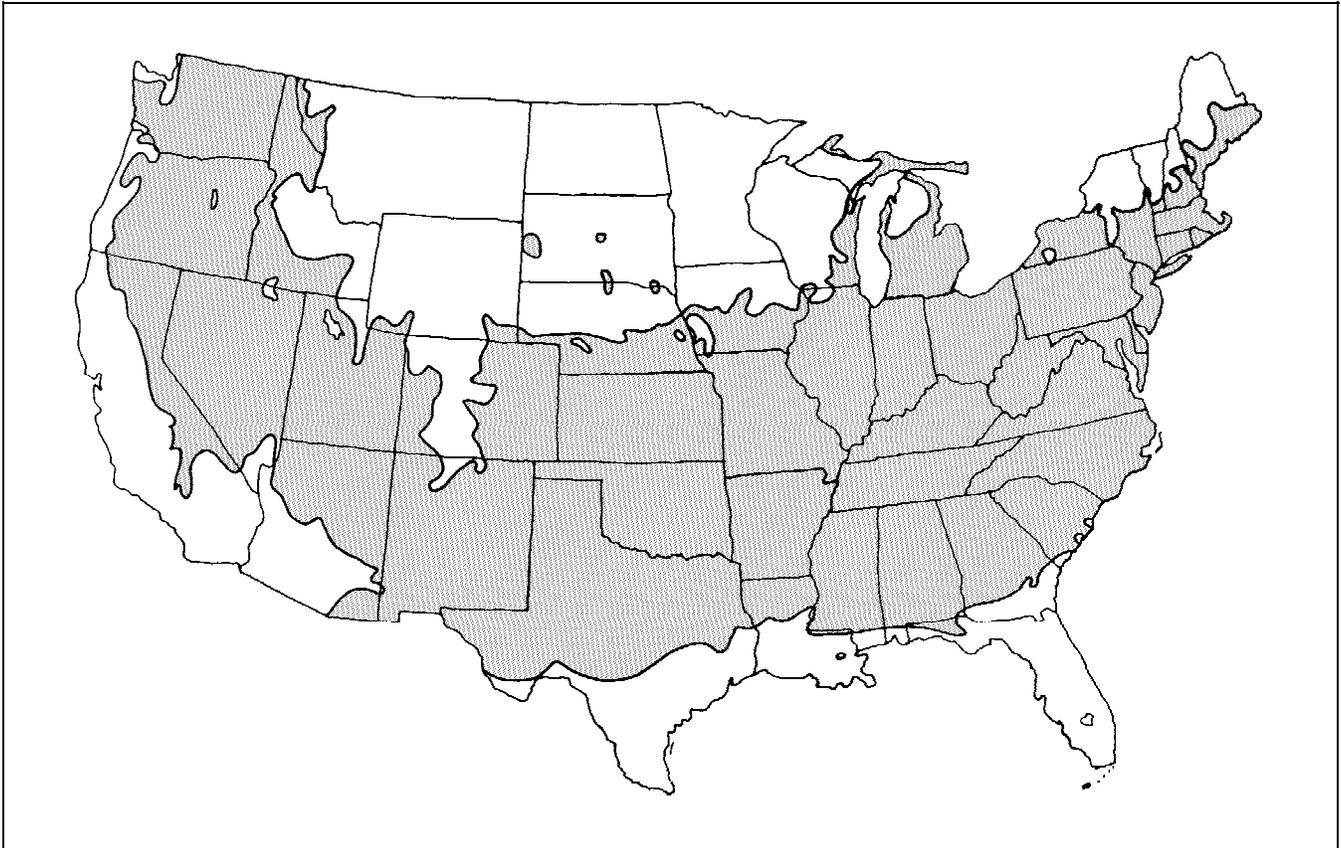


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

**Crown shape:** spreading; upright

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** ovate

**Leaf venation:** banchidodrome; pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** red

**Fall characteristic:** showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristics:** showy; spring flowering

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** < .5 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** black; blue

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; no significant litter problem; showy

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** medium

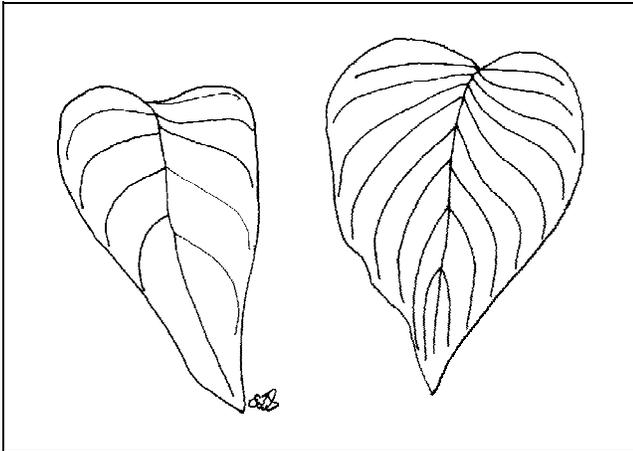


Figure 3. Foliage of Giant Dogwood.

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun;  
tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic;  
well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

### Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** not known to be  
susceptible

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not  
affected by pests

## USE AND MANAGEMENT

Giant Dogwood should be grown in full sun for best flowering on moist, well-drained, acid soil. Used most often as a patio or medium-sized shade tree, Giant Dogwood has been planted as a street tree in some communities and may be considered more tolerant of urban soil than other dogwoods. It has been the fastest growing dogwood at the North Carolina State Arboretum.

The cultivar 'Variegata' has narrow, yellow-edged leaves but is rare in cultivation.

Propagation is by cuttings with ease or seeds with difficulty.

### Pests

No pests are of major concern.

### Diseases

Leaf spot, twig blight, or canker.