

Swida alternifolia*

Alternate-leaf or Pagoda Dogwood

Tried and True
Native Plants
of the Mid-Atlantic



Common names derive from leaf arrangement and from layers of horizontal branches tapering toward the top. Ecologist and entomologist Doug Tallamy calls this **native**** “a great reminder that our plants are our bird-feeders.”***

Tree	Young Tree, Leaves, Flowers w/ Bee, Fruit	
Height: 15–25 feet	  	
Spread: 15–35 feet		
Bloom Color: Creamy white		
Characteristics		
Flat-topped, small deciduous tree or large shrub with horizontal branching habit		
Alternate , pinnate , ovate leaves—smooth green above, whitish pubescent below—clustered at branch ends, appearing almost whorled		
Flat, fragrant, flower clusters (cymes) May to June		
Blue-black fruits (drupes) in July and August; persistent fruit stalks turn attractive red		
Mix of yellow and maroon fall foliage		
Old bark ridged, gray/brown; young stems purple		
Attributes		
Tolerant of sun and light shade; no serious pests although scale, leaf miners, and borers appear on occasion; susceptible to leaf spot, twig and leaf blights, root rot, and canker		
Deer occasionally severely damage		
Attracts many pollinators; high wildlife value used by 64 wildlife species and 43 bird species	Excellent Replacement for	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	<p><i>Acer palmatum</i> - Japanese Maple</p> <p><i>Benthamidia japonica</i> - Kousa Dogwood</p> <p><i>Koelreuteria paniculata</i> - Golden Raintree</p> <p><i>Ulmus parviflora</i>, <i>U. pumila</i> - Chinese & Siberian Elms</p>	
Soil Requirements: Rich, acidic	<p>*Synonymous with <i>Cornus alternifolia</i> as it was known before traditional <i>Cornus</i> was split into several genera. **In the Mid-Atlantic, it is absent in DC. In DE, it is common in the Piedmont & rare in the Coastal Plain. It occurs in northern MD and throughout PA. In VA, it is frequent in the mountains & infrequent to rare elsewhere. In NoVA, it is not reported in Alexandria, Fairfax City & Prince William County. ***From <i>The Living Landscape: Designing for Beauty and Biodiversity in the Home Garden</i>, page 223.</p>	
Light Requirements: Partial Shade, Shade		
Water Requirements: Moist		
Moisture vital for longterm survival; mulch root zone		
Use as specimen, on terrace, along shaded water's edge, in woodland gardens and naturalistic areas		
Hardiness: USDA Zones 3-7		

developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria

Images by Elaine Mills, U.S. National Arboretum and private garden, Arlington



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