



## Cooperative Extension Publications

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## Native Trees and Shrubs for Maine Landscapes

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### Pagoda Dogwood

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#### *(Cornus alternifolia)*

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*Developed by Marjorie Peronto, associate Extension professor, University of Maine Cooperative Extension; and Reeser C. Manley, assistant professor of horticulture, University of Maine.*

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#### Go native!

This series of publications is the result of a five-year research project that evaluated the adaptability of a variety of native trees and shrubs to the stresses of urban and residential landscapes in Maine. Non-native invasive plants pose a serious threat to Maine's biodiversity. Plants such as Japanese barberry, shrubby honeysuckle, and Asiatic bittersweet, originally introduced for their ornamental features, have escaped from our landscapes, colonizing natural areas and displacing native plants and animals. By landscaping with native plants, we can create vegetation corridors that link fragmented wild areas, providing food and shelter for the native wildlife that is an integral part of our ecosystem. Your landscape choices can have an impact on the environment that goes far beyond your property lines.

### Description

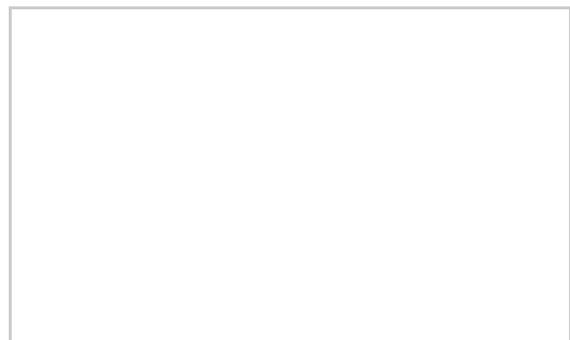
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**Form:** a graceful-looking small tree with horizontally-tiered branches that turn upward at the ends

**Size:** 20 to 30 feet high, two-thirds as wide

**Ornamental characteristics:**

- pagoda-like, layered branching structure



- flat-topped clusters of creamy white flowers held above the foliage in spring
- loose clusters of blue to reddish purple berries in late summer
- red, yellow, and orange fall foliage



Photo by Reeser C. Manley

## Landscape Use

Pagoda dogwood is at home in the woodland garden under the shade of sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*), and sweet birch (*B. lenta*). Use it with other deciduous forest understory trees such as striped maple (*Acer pensylvanicum*) and shadblow serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*), and underplant it with colonies of two shade-tolerant viburnums, mapleleaf viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*) and hobblebush (*V. alnifolium*).

You can also place pagoda dogwood at the forest edge and enjoy its unique horizontal branching habit, spring flowers, and fall foliage against the dark trunks of larger trees. *Cornus alternifolia* can also be tucked into protected alcoves around the house, or used as a specimen tree in a sunny garden where mulching and summer irrigation protect its roots from heat and drought.



Photo by Reeser C. Manley

## Culture

**Hardiness:** USDA zone 3b

**Soil requirements:** prefers moderately to well-drained soils

**Light requirements:** shade-tolerant

**Stress tolerances:**

soil compaction—intolerant

pollution—intolerant

deicing salts—unknown

urban heat islands—intolerant  
drought—intolerant  
seasonal flooding—intolerant

**Insect and disease problems:** infrequent



## Wildlife Value

Pagoda dogwood is used for cover and nesting by robins, waxwings, red-eyed vireos, scarlet tanagers, and purple finches. Several species of songbirds eat its berries.

## Maintenance

**Irrigation:** During the establishment period, defined as one year after planting for each inch of trunk diameter at planting time, water your trees regularly during the growing season. Give the root zone of each tree 1 inch of water per week; in general, a tree's root zone extends twice as wide as its canopy. After the establishment period, provide supplemental irrigation during periods of severe drought.

**Fertilization:** Landscape trees and shrubs should not be fertilized unless a soil test indicates a need. Correct soil pH, if necessary, by amending the backfill soil. No nitrogen fertilizer should be added at planting or during the first growing season.

### To learn more about native woody plants

Visit the Eastern Maine Native Plant Arboretum at University of Maine Cooperative Extension's Penobscot County office, 307 Maine Avenue in Bangor. Established in 2004, the arboretum displays 24 different native tree and shrub species that can be used in managed landscapes.

*Reviewed by Cathy Neal, Extension professor, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension.*

*Photos by Reeser C. Manley.*

*Illustration by Margery Read, Extension master gardener.*

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