

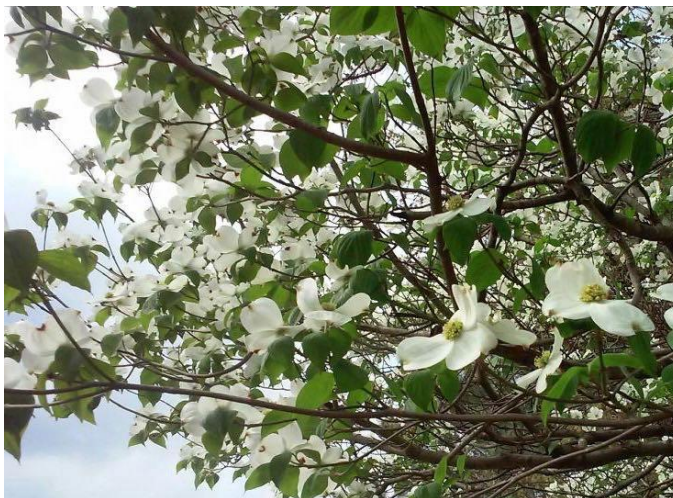


April 1, 2019

Flowering Dogwoods

By Lydia Holley

The dogwoods are blooming! A flowering dogwood tree (*Cornus florida*) is as lovely and graceful as a prima ballerina. Many of these trees have danced their way into the hearts of gardeners with their stunning seasonal show, adorned in nature's finery. Like a spotlight shining on them, these beautiful trees light up the edge of the woods.



National treasures, dogwoods are native to the Eastern portion of the United States, including East Texas. Because of that, they are a valuable addition to any landscape.

Dogwoods are the host plant for the Spring Azure butterfly. The red (sometimes yellow) berries which form in fall feed birds, some resources say up to 28 separate bird species.

Ever wonder how dogwoods spread in nature? The birds eat the fruits. Those seeds are released through droppings, and a tree springs up where the conditions are right. In your own garden, you will want to add dogwoods where they will thrive. A slow-growing, understory tree, dogwoods need shade from the hottest portion of the day. They prefer acidic, moist, but well-draining soil, and can reach up to 30 feet tall. They also exhibit colorful fall foliage.

The white or pink petals of the flowering dogwood are actually bracts, which look like a four-petaled flower. Usually blooming around Easter, legend says that the four bracts form a cross; the tiny flowers clustered in the middle symbolize the crown of thorns; the indentions at each end of the bracts symbolize nail dents; and the bracts turn reddish around each indentation, symbolizing blood.

Unfortunately, dogwoods are being plagued by dogwood anthracnose, a fungus. Many dogwoods in the Eastern portion of the United States have been affected. This fungus has not yet been documented in Texas, but one needs to be aware of this blight that is rapidly spreading.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com, or visit txmq.org/hendersonmq.