



Plant of The Month January 2024: Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) Shrub



In winter, the red branches of the Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) shrub provides a flash of garden colour as well as winter berries for birds. This quick growing native shrub likes moist soil and provides year-round colour, with white blooms in spring, white berries and red leaves in fall and the characteristic red branches all year. It provides nectar and pollen for birds, butterflies and bees and supports many caterpillar species, including the spring azure butterfly (*Celastrina ladon*) and polyphemus moth (*Antheraea polyphemus*). The white berries and shrub branches provide winter food and shelter for birds. The branches are often used in decorative floral and container arrangements.

DETAILS:

Growing Conditions:

Sun: Full sun to part sun

Water: moist to wet.

Maintenance: minimal, prune in spring to encourage new red branch growth and to maintain desired size and shape

Tolerates: a variety of soils from sandy to clay but prefers rich, fertile soil that is consistently moist. Tolerates urban pollution. Deer resistant.

Zone: grows in Zones 2-7; hardy native shrub

Description / Characteristics:

Height x Spread: Loose, broad spreading, rounded, multi-stemmed deciduous shrub that reaches mature size: 9ft (2.5-3m) high; mature 8-10 ft (2.5-3m) wide.

Bloom time and description: Small white flowers in May-June; fall foliage purplish to reddish.

Fruit: White berry clusters in August-September

Pests & Disease: Minimal

Propagation: Can be propagated by cutting of underground stems (stolons)

Special value: Nectar, pollen and berry source; Likely larval host to spring azure butterfly (*Celastrina ladon*) and polyphemus moth (*Antheraea polyphemus*)

Toxicity: Berries reportedly bitter, unpalatable.

Common Names: Red Osier Dogwood, Red Twig Dogwood

Origin: Native to Ontario.