

THE ROSEDALE PLANTSMAN'S GUIDE TO CARING FOR FLOWERING DOGWOODS (*Cornus florida*)

A few simple steps will help provide the best growing and flowering conditions for both new and existing Flowering Native Dogwoods (*Cornus florida*). These steps also will help protect Flowering Dogwoods from their most serious pests, the fungal disease of Dogwood foliage called "Anthracnose", and Dogwood trunk borers. With proper care, your Flowering Dogwoods will provide years of magnificent blooms, bright fall color and year-round, graceful character.

- 1. PLANTING LOCATION:** For best results, place the tree in an open, sunny location with good air circulation. The Anthracnose fungus (like bread molds and many other fungi) grows best in moist, still conditions when wet foliage does not dry quickly. Avoid planting Dogwoods under overhanging trees or in crowded conditions. Prune away any overhanging or crowding branches from trees.
- 2. SOIL CONDITIONS:** Dogwoods need average-to-moist (but not wet) humusy soils. Avoid dry or sandy conditions. Surround the tree with 3-4' diameter circle of bark mulch (about 2" thick) to help preserve soil moisture, to reduce temperature fluctuations, and to help prevent competition from turf grasses.
- 3. AVOID TRUNK INJURY:** Keep mowers and string trimmers away from the trunk. Like other trees, Dogwoods cannot "heal" cuts or bruises to the living tissues under the bark; instead, all trees must grow over their wounds with new layers of tissue each year until the wounds are covered. Trunk injuries interrupt the flow of water, nutrients and food through conductive tissues, which can result in branch dieback or, in severe cases, the death of the tree. Trunk injuries also provide potential entry points for Dogwood trunk borers.
- 4. PRUNING:** To help avoid the spread of Anthracnose spores, remove and compost or burn any dead branches and all fallen leaves. Vertical branch "suckers" or watersprouts are more susceptible to Anthracnose infections: remove these and leave only well formed woody branches and twigs. This pruning technique also will promote good air circulation for the foliage, and enhance the graceful, natural branch structure of these handsome native trees.
- 5. FERTILIZATION:** Dogwoods grow best with light-to-moderate applications of organic-based fertilizers, such as 4-10-6, in early fall or spring. Excessive fertilization should be avoided because it encourages the growth of water sprouts (suckers) and it can "burn" the tree by drawing water away from the roots.
- 6. LANDSCAPE VALUE:** Although the Anthracnose disease killed a number of Flowering Dogwoods in our area during the 1980's, most of these trees were older specimens or trees that are weakened due to difficult site conditions, trunk injuries (mostly due to mowers), or drought. With proper placement and care to help reduce the risk of Anthracnose infection, new and existing Flowering Dogwoods should continue to be handsome and thriving trees in our region's landscape.

Please feel free to call us for any information or assistance with your garden questions - we'll gladly help you.