

## flowering dogwood *Cornus florida*

Kingdom: Plantae

Division/Phylum: Magnoliophyta

Class: Magnoliopsida

Order: Cornales

Family: Cornaceae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

### FEATURES

The flowering dogwood is a deciduous tree that may grow to 40 feet tall. Its trunk diameter at most is about two feet. The crown is rounded. The brown bark is divided into square plates and gives the appearance of alligator skin. The leaf buds are thin and pointed while the flower buds are on separate stalks and are biscuit-shaped. Leaves are arranged opposite each other on the stem. The simple leaf is up to six inches long, about three inches wide, oval-shaped and with deep veins. Yellow-green flowers are produced in a dense cluster that is surrounded by four, large, white petallike bracts. The fruit is a red, ovoid berry, up to one-half inch long, containing one or two seeds.

### BEHAVIORS

The flowering dogwood may be found in the southern one-half of Illinois. It grows in rocky woods, on wooded slopes and in low woods. Flowers are produced from April through May. Its wood is used for tool handles and for making golf club heads. The twigs and berries are important wildlife food. This tree is often grown as an ornamental. Its leaves turn red in the fall. Dogwoods in Illinois have been decimated by the introduction of the disease known as dogwood anthracnose (*Discula destructiva*). In 1979 this fungus was released in the eastern United States from plants brought from Asia for sale in the ornamental plant trade. By 1995 it had spread to Illinois. The results on both native and ornamental dogwood trees have been devastating, with both mature and immature dogwood trees being killed.

### HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

**bottomland forests**

Woodland Habitats

**bottomland forests; coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests**

Prairie and Edge Habitats

**none**

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