Native Plant of the Month

Red Osier Dogwood
*Cornus stolonifera* (also *screicea*)

- “Osier” comes from the French/Gaulish word that means “riverbed,” which is prime habitat for this plant. “Osier” is also the word used for the long flexible branches used in wicker basketry.
- There are three types of dogwoods that grow in our area: a groundcover, a flowering tree, and this attractive shrub.
- The berries are important food for many birds and, though bitter, were also eaten by Native Americans.
- Red osier dogwood thickets provide nest sites and cover for many songbirds.

Landscape Value

Red osier dogwood is an important medium-sized shrub used extensively in naturalized landscapes. The red branches in winter provide important winter interest. The umbels of white flowers in spring are followed by clusters of white to blue berries.

This plant is most successful in a sunny, rich, moist garden soil. Place it behind the perennial border, plant en masse or mix it with other native plants such as snowberry, mock orange, red elderberry, thimbleberry, tall Oregon grape, paper birch and red cedar for year round interest. Trim back to old wood every few years to encourage new red growth.

Text by Heidi Bohan
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