

# ***Cornus kousa* ‘Milky Way’: ‘Milky Way’ Kousa Dogwood<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Introduction**

This cultivar of Kousa dogwood produces more flowers and fruit than the species and may be more vigorous. It grows 15 to 20 feet tall and has beautiful exfoliating bark, many long-lasting flowers, good fall color, and attractive fruit. Branches grow upright when the tree is young, but appear in horizontal layers on mature trees. The crown eventually grows wider than it is tall on many specimens. It would be difficult to use too many Kousa dogwoods. The white, pointed bracts are produced a month later than flowering dogwood and are effective for about a month, sometimes longer. The red fruits are edible, and they look like a big, round raspberry. Birds devour the fruit quickly. Fall color varies from dull red to maroon.

## **General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Cornus kousa*

**Pronunciation:** KOR-nus KOO-suh

**Common name(s):** ‘Milky Way’ kousa dogwood, ‘Milky Way’ Chinese dogwood, ‘Milky Way’ Japanese dogwood

**Family:** *Cornaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5B through 8B (Figure 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Invasive potential:** not assessed/incomplete assessment

**Uses:** specimen; screen; container or planter; deck or patio

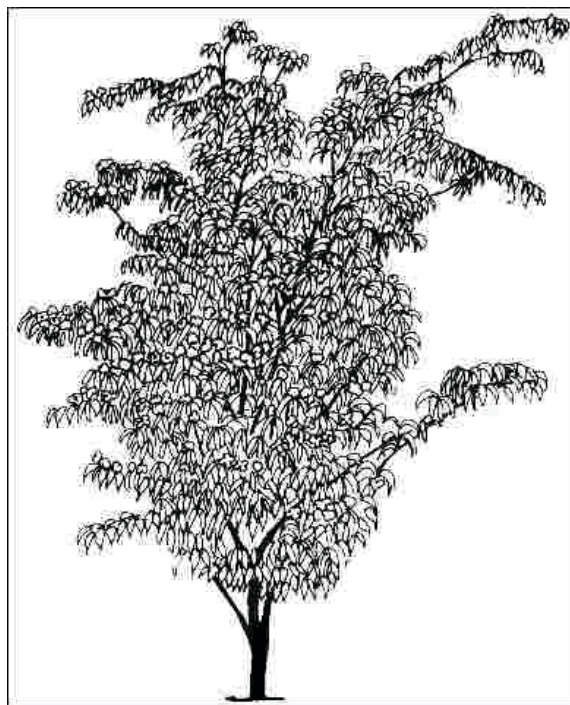


Figure 1. Young *Cornus kousa* ‘Milky Way’: ‘Milky Way’ kousa dogwood.

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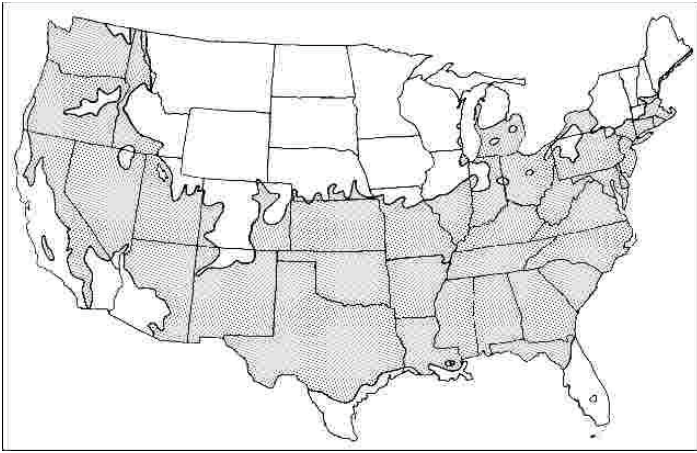


Figure 2. Range.

## Description

**Height:** 15 to 20 feet

**Spread:** 15 to 20 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical

**Crown shape:** round

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Figure 3)

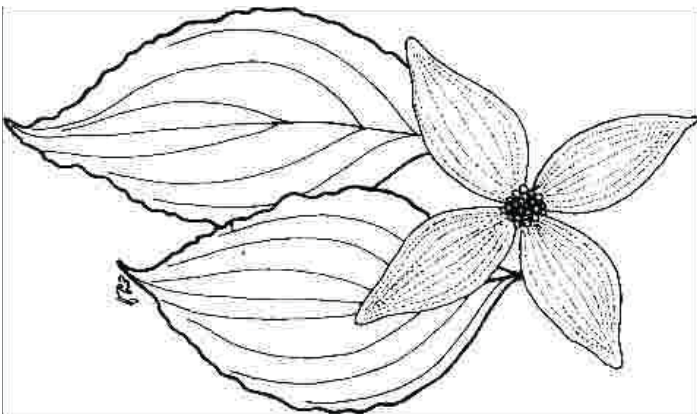


Figure 3. Foliage.

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** ovate

**Leaf venation:** bowed, pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** purple, red

**Fall characteristic:** showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** white/cream/gray

**Flower characteristics:** very showy

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval, round

**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** red

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

**Pruning requirement:** little required

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown, green

**Current year twig thickness:** medium

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun, partial sun, or partial shade

**Soil tolerances:** sand; loam; clay; acidic; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem

**Winter interest:** yes

**Outstanding tree:** yes

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** resistant

**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

## Use and Management

The bark is so attractive on Kousa dogwood that lower branches should be selectively thinned to show it off. Although young trees show only limited bark exfoliation, the tree shows its true bark character as it gets older. The tree also makes a great silhouette as a specimen planting and should be allowed to branch close to the ground to enjoy its full character. The strong horizontal branching habit on older plants is difficult to find in other trees, and it looks great when lit from beneath the canopy. Planting a Kousa dogwood can extend the spring flowering season several weeks since it flowers just after flowering dogwood.

Kousa dogwood should be planted in place of *Cornus florida* where *Discula* anthracnose is a problem. It is not rated as an urban tough tree and needs open soil space to look its best. Some shade will improve performance in restricted soil spaces.

Growth is best on moist, loamy, well-drained soil (not heavy clay) with mulch or leaf litter accumulated over the roots. Kousa dogwood is not particularly drought- or heat-tolerant, requiring irrigation during drought periods in summer. It is sensitive to reflected heat, so is not suited to downtown landscapes. Best in some shade in the southern part of its range.

## Pests

Several borers will attack dogwood. Try to keep the trees healthy with regular fertilization. Indications of borer problems are holes in the trunk, leaves smaller than normal, and dieback of the crown.

Dogwood club gall midge causes galls at the branch tips. The leaves on affected branch tips may be distorted and the branch may fail to form a flower bud. Prune out the galls as soon as they are seen.

Leaf miners cause brown blister-like mines on the under-sides of leaves. The adult leaf miner skeletonizes the leaves.

Scales can build up to large numbers before being detected. Horticultural oil will help control overwintering stages.

Aphids on small trees may be partially removed by spraying them with a strong stream of water from the garden hose.

## Diseases

Most of the diseases listed are seen most often on *Cornus florida*. However other dogwoods are susceptible to the diseases listed.

Early symptoms of dogwood canker are smaller and paler leaves. Leaves on infected branches are red earlier in the fall. At first the symptoms appear only on the infected side of the tree but become more general as the canker enlarges. There is no chemical control for the disease. Avoid trunk wounds during and after planting.

Crown canker is associated with wet soils and can be controlled with appropriate fungicides.

Flower and leaf blight caused by *Botrytis cinerea* attacks fading bracts, especially during wet weather. Infected flower parts fall on the leaves spreading the infection.

A large number of leaf spots attack dogwood. Clean up and dispose of infected leaves.

Powdery mildew covers the leaves with a fine white coating.

Leaf scorch occurs during hot, dry, windy weather. This condition looks like a disease. Scorch symptoms are drying and browning of the leaf margins, or, in more serious cases, drying and browning of the interveinal area.