

KOUSA DOGWOOD

Dogwood trees are widely known for their delicate beauty, and the kousa variety adds a toughness that makes this species an excellent choice for home landscapes and urban areas. The tree also makes a visual contribution year-round. In spring, it produces a heavenly array of star-like blooms. In summer, its intriguing canopy of layered branches provides shade and beauty. In autumn, it offers spectacular bright red color. Even in winter, this tree has an appeal all its own with bark that resembles a jigsaw puzzle.

The spring blooms are probably the tree’s largest selling point — and its most misunderstood. The white “petals” aren’t actually petals at all. They are modified leaves called bracts that surround the small, greenish-yellow, insignificant flowers.



Hardiness Zones

The kousa dogwood (japanese dogwood) can be expected to grow in Hardiness Zones 5–8.



Tree Type

This tree is considered both a flowering tree and an ornamental tree. It is typically planted for both its visual interest and profusion of spring flowers.



Mature Size

The kousa dogwood grows to a height of 15-25' and a spread of around 25' at maturity.



Growth Rate

This tree grows at a slow to medium rate, with height increases of anywhere from less than 12" to 24" per year.



Sun Preference

Full sun and partial shade are best for this tree, meaning it prefers a minimum of four hours of direct, unfiltered sunlight each day.



Soil Preference

The kousa dogwood grows in acidic, loamy, moist, sandy, well-drained and clay soils. It prefers average moisture but is somewhat drought-resistant.



Attributes

This tree:

- Blooms May–June, with distinctive white bracts surrounding small, greenish-yellow flowers.

- Is a good choice for planting near utility lines, buildings or walls.
- Features dark green leaves that are 2–4" long and elliptic-ovate in shape.
- Has a beautiful form with horizontal branching.
- Grows in a rounded shape.
- Requires mulch around the trunk to protect it from lawnmower or weed cutter damage that could cause poor health.
- Produces pinkish-red to red fruit that attracts songbirds.
- Provides great fall color, with leaves turning purple and scarlet.
- Is tougher than the native flowering dogwood when it comes to disease and pests.
- Develops a camouflage pattern of tan and brown on the trunk due to exfoliation.



Wildlife Value

Kousa dogwood seeds are eaten by squirrels and birds.



History/Lore

Native to Japan, Korea and China, the first scientific observations of the kousa dogwood in the United States were recorded in 1875.

If you're interested in the meaning behind common tree names, this one may underwhelm. "Kousa" is apparently the Japanese word for dogwood. This species does, however, go by other names including Chinese dogwood, Japanese dogwood, Japanese flowering dogwood and Japanese strawberry tree.

