



## *Cornus mas* Cornelian-Cherry<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

Cornelian-Cherry is a slow-growing, small tree or large shrub preferring sun or partial shade and a well-drained soil (Fig. 1). Flowers are produced in northern areas but most of the south lacks the chilling hours required to set flower buds. 'Spring Glow' is the one cultivar which will flower in the south. The growth rate is moderate and young plants transplant easily. Bark is very showy and is often displayed by removing lower foliage. A height of 15 to 25 feet and spread of 12 to 18 feet can be expected, eventually. The yellow flowers produced in very early spring are similar to Forsythia and are followed by red fruit which is edible and partially hidden by the foliage. The fall color is red. Cornelian-Cherry responds well to pruning and may be used as a hedge plant.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Cornus mas*  
**Pronunciation:** KOR-nus mass  
**Common name(s):** Cornelian-Cherry  
**Family:** *Cornaceae*  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 5 through 8A (Fig. 2)  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; hedge; near a deck or patio; specimen  
**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

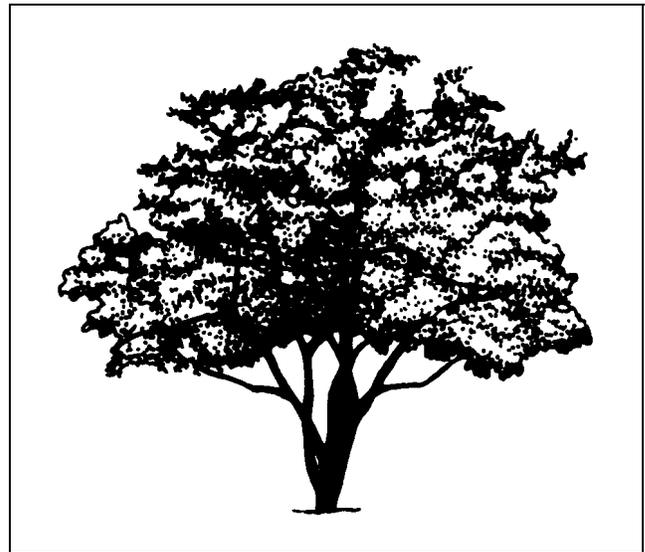


Figure 1. Mature Cornelian-Cherry.

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 15 to 25 feet  
**Spread:** 12 to 18 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms  
**Crown shape:** round  
**Crown density:** moderate  
**Growth rate:** slow  
**Texture:** medium

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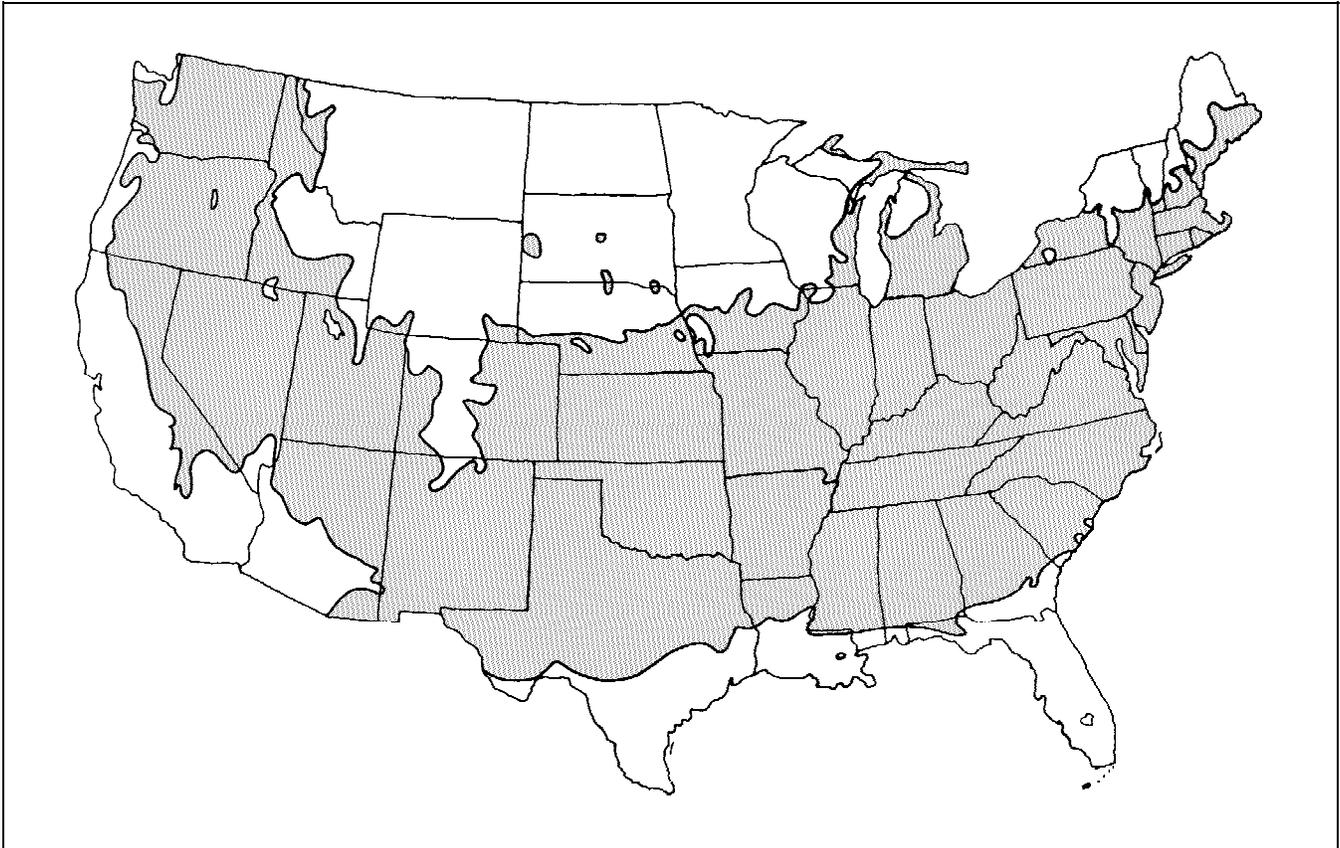


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

**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:** red

**Fall characteristic:** showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** yellow

**Flower characteristics:** showy; spring flowering; winter flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** oval

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

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** red; yellow

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; suited for human consumption; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; showy

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; showy trunk; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** medium

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

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

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** low

**Soil salt tolerance:** poor

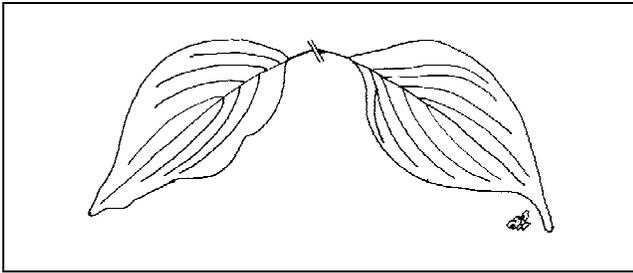


Figure 3. Foliage of Cornelian-Cherry.

## Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

**Outstanding tree:** tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Ozone sensitivity:** tolerant

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** not known to be susceptible

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## USE AND MANAGEMENT

The once popular species has fallen out of the trade recently but deserves a comeback. It is pest free and grows well on a variety of soil including clay. Soil should be kept moist with good drainage. Mulching encourages better root growth and moderate drought tolerance. But not considered highly drought tolerant by any means. Grows in sun to part shade. Use it as a specimen or in a monoculture group planting or shrub border. The fruit makes an excellent tart jelly - also attracts birds. Makes an excellent patio tree in the yard and should be planted more.

Several cultivars are listed but may not be readily available: 'Alba' - white fruit; 'Aureo-Elegantissima' - leaves bordered in yellow, green and pink; 'Elegantissima' - leaves yellow, green and pink; 'Flava' - yellow fruits; 'Fructu Violaceo' - purple fruits; 'Golden Glory' had dark green foliage with a dense, upright habit; 'Macrocarpa' - larger fruits; 'Nana' - dwarf, three feet tall, 'Variegata'--leaves with white variegations; 'Xanthocarpa' - yellow fruit. One of the best for the southern United States is 'Spring Glow' which has a low chilling requirement and beautiful flowers, handsome, leathery foliage which looks good until frost. *Cornus officinalis* would be a better choice for the south if you can find it.

## 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 undersides of leaves. The adult leaf miner skeletonizes the leaves.

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

Aphids may be controlled 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.