

# Red Osier Dogwood

*Cornus sericea* L.

## Taxonomic Classification

**Domain:** *Eukaryotes*

**Kingdom:** *Plantae*

**Phylum/Division:**

*Anthophyta*

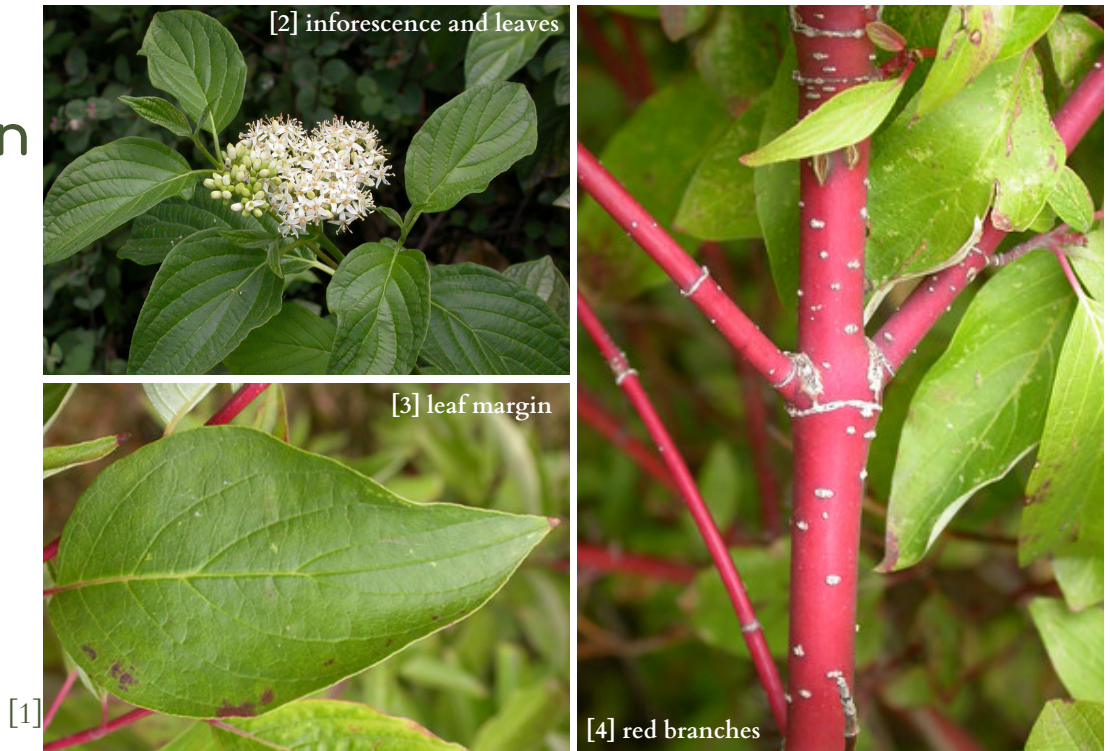
**Class:** *Dicotyledoneae*

**Order:** *Cornales*

**Family:** *Cornaceae*

**Genus:** *Cornus*

**Species:** *sericea*



## Botanical Description

Shrubs to 12 feet tall; branches opposite, bright red or orange with minimal hairs, older stems gray or green and smooth. Leaves simple, opposite, to 12 cm long, with acute or acuminate tips (the tips coming to an angle less than 90 degrees), green above, pale beneath; leaf margins entire (smooth leaf blade). Flowers in cymes (flat-topped clusters), petals white or cream, up to 3.5 mm long. Fruit a drupe (berry with large stone-like seed) up to 9 mm thick, white at maturity. [5]

# Identification Tips

The bright red or orange stem color is a helpful tip when identifying Red-osier Dogwood. Another giveaway is the lighter underside of the leaf compared to the darker green top. Red-Osier dogwood lacks the large, petal-like bracts of other flowering dogwoods and the cymes dry out and persist through winter.



## Fun Fact!

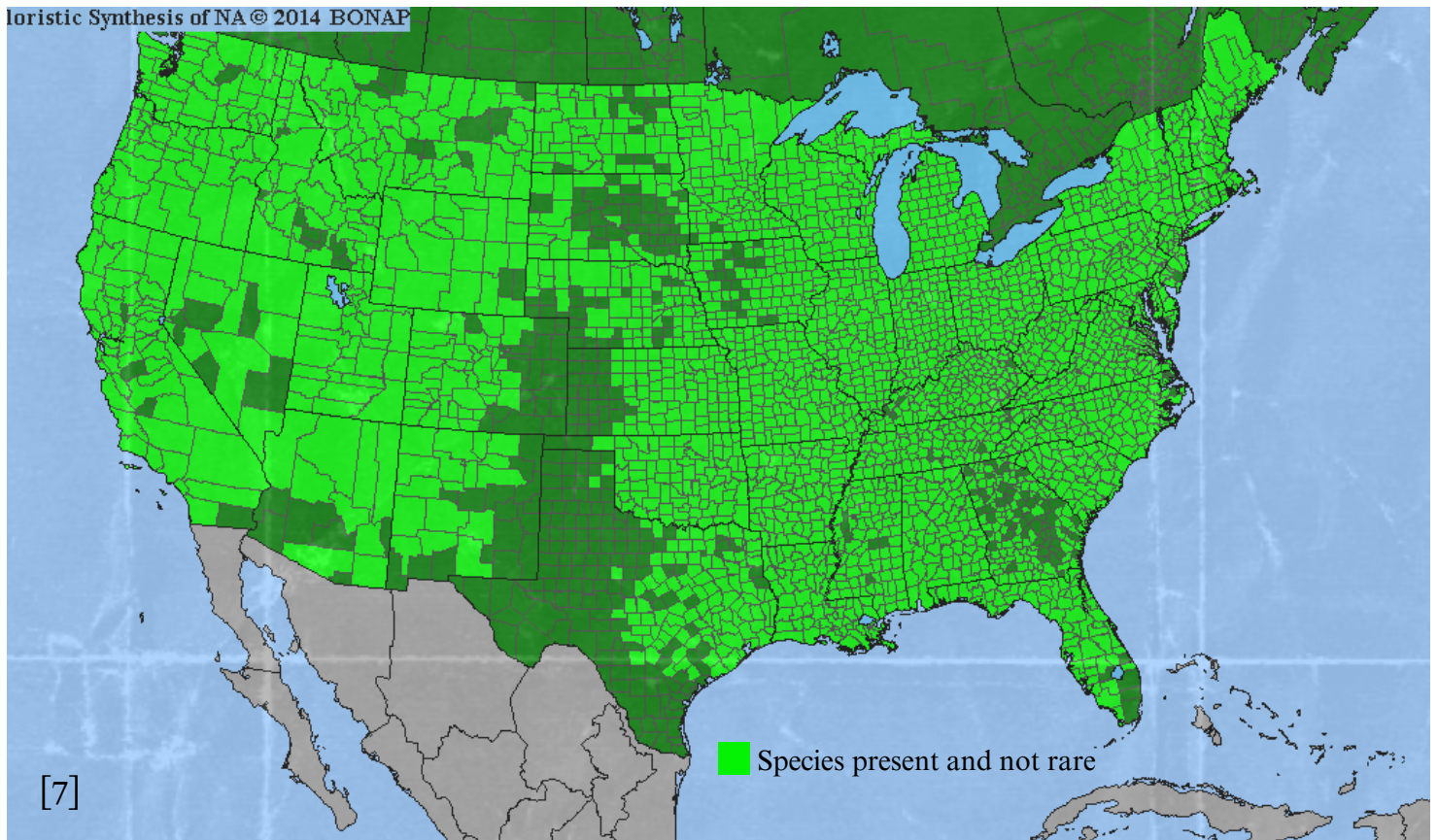
If you gently tear apart the leaf or stem you can see white web-like fibers in the leaf – but don't destroy all the leaves on our plant!

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## Ethnobotanical and Other Uses

Popular ornamental use in landscaping, red-osier dogwood has a well-established root system that stabilizes soil along riverbanks, after a disturbance such as fire, and it provides an important food source for many animals. While the fruits are edible, they have a bitter taste that is often unappealing for humans. Native Americans have utilized many parts of the plant for purposes such as basketry, medicinal tonics, and color dyes [6].

## Habitat Range



## Conservation Status

On a global scale, the plant is considered secure. [1]

## Plant Ecology

Common in woodland/woodland riparian habitats across Northern America, found commonly along riverbanks. Plants flower from May to July.

## References:

- [1] *Cornus Sericea*. NatureServe Explorer 2.0. (n.d.-b).  
[https://explorer.natureserve.org/Taxon/ELEMENT\\_GLOBAL.2.140261/Cornus\\_sericea](https://explorer.natureserve.org/Taxon/ELEMENT_GLOBAL.2.140261/Cornus_sericea)
- [2] Clark, C. (2006). *Cornus sericea leaves and inflorescence 2003-08-11.jpg*. photograph.
- [3] Lavin, M. (2006). *5258214214\_ee5b8fab1c\_w.jpg*. photograph, Bozeman MT.
- [4] Lavin, M. (2006). *5257603697\_862b5077ac\_w.jpg*. photograph, Bozeman MT.

[5] Buren, R. V. (2011). In *Woody Plants of Utah a field guide with identification keys to native and naturalized trees, shrubs, cacti, and vines* (pp. 283–284). Utah State University Press.

[6] Pijut, P. M. (2004). *Cornus sericea* L. redosier dogwood CORNACEAE Synonyms: *Cornus stolonifera* Michx. *Wildland Shrubs of the United States and Its Territories: Thamnic Descriptions: Volume*, 249.

[7] Kartesz, J.T., The Biota of North America Program (BONAP). 2015. *Taxonomic Data Center*.

(<http://www.bonap.net/tdc>). Chapel Hill, N.C. [maps generated from Kartesz, J.T. 2015. Floristic Synthesis of North America, Version 1.0. Biota of North America Program (BONAP). (in press)]

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Information collated by Anne Robinson under the direction of Dr. Ashley N. Egan in collaboration with UVU's summer 2023 BOT 2050 and fall 2023 BOT 4300 classes and through the UVU Excelerate Program.

