

INDIGO SILKY DOGWOOD (Cornus amomum)
For Windbreaks, Streambanks, Wildlife and
Environmental Improvement
In Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin

Description: Indigo silky dogwood (Cornus amomum) has been released by the Ecological Sciences Division of the Soil Conservation Service as an improved variety of silky dogwood. Indigo is a spreading shrub that can grow 10 feet tall. The stems are red when young but turn reddish brown and gray as they mature. Indigo has yellowish-white flowers that bloom in mid-June. It produces an abundant crop of fruit which ripens in September. The fruit is pale to dark blue and about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in diameter. Silky dogwood can be distinguished from red osier dogwood by the dark brown pith in 1 and 2 year old stems. In red osier dogwood, the pith is white.



Conservation Use: Indigo is especially useful for single-row windbreaks in fields with center pivot irrigation systems because it grows low enough that the spray bar can pass over it. It can also be used in multi-row field windbreaks and farmstead windbreaks. Being densely twigged it acts as a good snow barrier. Stems and leaves are desirable deer browse, and the fruit is eaten by upland game birds and many songbirds. Silky dogwood is also useful on streambanks and for beautification and landscape plantings.

Site: Indigo silky dogwood has been evaluated in 20 states, particularly in the lake states, where it has performed well. It is well adapted to wet soils, swamp edges or damp thickets. It is especially well adapted on organic soils. Dogwood plants have a wide range of adaptation to soils but will not grow well on dry upland sites.

Site Preparation: Prepare site by plowing or disking if equipment can be used. Approved herbicides may also be used for perennial weed and grass control. Minimum soil preparation should consist of scalping sod off an area at least one foot across.

Date of Planting: Plant in early spring, as soon as the frost is out of the ground.

Planting Method: Plants may be planted by hand or with a tree planter. Holes or furrows should be deep enough to take the full root without bending. If planted in rows where equipment can be used, allow enough room to mow or cultivate for weed control. The maximum spacing between plants should be 6 feet for windbreaks. An 8x10 to 10x10 foot spacing is recommended for clump plantings.

Management: Weed and grass control is necessary for good establishment and uniform growth; cultivation is necessary for successful windbreak plantings. Approved herbicides provide good weed control after establishment year; follow the instructions on the label. Protect from fire, grazing and trampling by livestock.



Nursery Propagation: Seedlings are easily grown from cleaned seed or freshly collected fruit **sown** in nursery beds in late October. There are about 11,500 seeds per pound which should produce 3,000 to 5,000 useable plants. **For** seedling production follow normal nursery operating procedures.

Dorian A. Carroll, Plant Materials Specialist
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