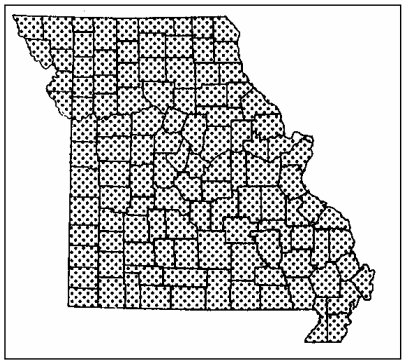
Dogwood

Cornus spp.

Flowering dogwood (*C. florida* L.), also called boxwood, is included here because it is a common tree in Missouri and is famous for the beauty of its spring blossoms. It is the official state tree of Missouri. Flowering dogwood is more common in the Ozarks, but roughleaf dogwood (*Cornus drummondii* C.A. Meyer) is more common throughout the state. None of the dogwood species is important commercially. They are common understory trees in oak-hickory forests. Dogwood has been extensively planted as an ornamental throughout the state and seldom grows larger than 6-8 inches in diameter and 30 feet tall, even on good sites.

The sapwood is pale to light pinkish brown and usually very wide. The heartwood is darker brown, frequently variegated. The bark is dark reddish brown, thin and broken into small square or rounded blocks. The wood has no characteristic odor or taste, and is heavy. It is quite hard, strong and tough for its weight. However, it is difficult to work with tools, wears smooth with use, glues poorly and is difficult to dry. For a dense wood, it shrinks considerably. The growth rings are distinct and the wood is diffuse porous. Texture is even and close, but the wood is not durable.

The woods of dogwoods cannot always be identified with certainty, but that is of little importance, since the trees are mainly ornamentals. In the past, their commercial uses were for shuttles for textile weaving, spools, bobbin heads, golf club heads and bearings. Uses were related to its hardness and smoothness under wear. These woods are not commercially available in Missouri, although they can be useful for small turnings and novelties in the home workshop.

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