
SUNNYSIDE THYMES

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“Helping Others Grow”

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SMG's Grow Native!

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Grey Dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*) instead of Autumn Olive

Unpleasant surprise! That's what it is! We moved to our new place about four years ago. The property consists of a large open field surrounded by woods. Along the edges was this somewhat attractive 10 to 15 foot bush with silvery leaves and white blooms. After a little research, it was discovered to be Autumn Olive. Oh No! It's a very invasive, non-native plant that makes a dense, tangled maze of bushes along the edges of the field. No one needs this on their property. It came from Asia in 1830.

It really became more prevalent during the 1940's to 1970's. Soil Conservation districts introduced it through their spring plant sales. They saw the benefits as wildlife cover and food, windbreaks, highway barriers and soil stabilizers. It was drought, disease resistant and insect resistant. Birds and animals ate the seeds which passed thru their digestion system but once hitting the ground, it rapidly grew into a 15 foot tall bush that became dense and difficult to control.

As a suitable replacement, Grey Dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*) is an excellent choice. It is a low growing wild hedge, native to the eastern north America. It is seldom more than 10-15 feet tall at maturity but can be pruned to form a small tree. Its flowers, which bloom in June or July, are white and loosely clustered, and its white fruit, which appears in September and October, is set off by bright red fruit stalks. Its leaves are opposite, taper pointed and oval.

It adapts easily and tolerates many climatic conditions. Only seedlings are practical and should be planted in early spring. Competing vegetation should be controlled by a two foot diameter the first few years after planting. It is adaptable to dry and wet soils. It tolerates full sun to part shade, has no serious insect or disease problems, and is deer tolerant.

It is excellent when planted in groups and left alone to spread naturally. It makes an effective border, can be along streams, ponds or near buildings. It can be particularly useful because of it's ability to grow in poor soils. It serves as a border, hedge, soil stabilization and wildlife food and shelter.

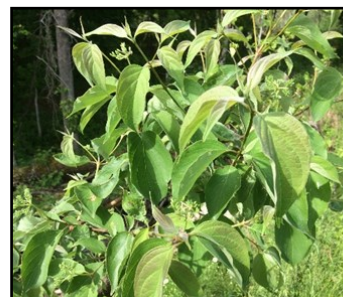
Resources:

<http://www.hort.uconn.edu/plants/details>

<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov>

<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plantfinder/plantfinderdetails>

<http://extension.msu.edu>



Above: Grey Dogwood, about 7 feet at 2 years old.

Below: Autumn Olive, 10 ft. thicket



All photos: Rosa Hutchins