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Pruning red dogwood

By SF Gate Contributor Updated November 23, 2020 The red dogwood bush (Cornus stolonifera or C. sericea) is also known as red osier or red twig dogwood because of the color of its young branches. This ornamental shrub puts out many slender branches from the base. It grows well in U.S. Department of Agriculture plant hardiness zones 3 though 8 and makes a thick hedge when planted three or four feet apart in full sun. Landscapers find it a good item for slopes because of the root system that holds soil in place effectively, preventing erosion. Red dogwood bushes require little maintenance, but they should be pruned properly to encourage the growth of the younger branches for color, according to Marcell's Tree Service. Pruning red twig dogwood once a year in late winter will help the red dogwood bush retain the bright red color of the twigs, according to Wilson Bros Gardens. The goal is to remove old stems, and those are the stems that are losing their bright red color. You may also want to shorten the red dogwood bush. You can do this by pruning the remaining stems of the bush by one-third to one-half of their height. If you feel like the bush needs a fresh start because it has become overgrown or unattractive, you can prune the bush to a height of about 10 inches, and your dogwood should show new life. Sharpen pruning shears, loppers or a saw. Sharp tools keep from shredding the pruned branches, reducing the chance of invading diseases or pests. Wipe the blades with rubbing alcohol on a cotton ball to sterilize them. Cut the branches with sharp pruning shears, loppers or a saw at the base near the ground above the first leaf node. Prune red dogwood bushes in late fall after the leaves have dropped. The bush may also be pruned in early spring before new growth appears, but it should be dormant. Trim only the oldest branches to open up the shrub and encourage new, red branches in the spring, resulting in a more open shape. The oldest branches are the largest ones that have turned brown and have a sandpaper-like texture. Cut off all the branches near the soil above the first leaf node to completely renew the shrub. A flush of new growth will appear during the next growing season, restoring the shrub. This method keeps the shrub to a smaller size. Mulch the red dogwood bushes with compost after pruning. No more compost is needed until the next year. Things You Will Need Pruning shears, loppers or saw Rubbing alcohol Cotton balls Use pruned branches for garden stakes. Dry them over the winter first to prevent them from taking root in the garden. Red dogwood is easily propagated from the pruned cuttings. Cut the branches into 12-inch segments. Cut the bottom end horizontally and the top end at an angle. Stick the bottom end into a pot of soil about halfway, and keep it well watered until it roots. Transplant red dogwood bushes after one or two hard frosts. Prune them before transplanting. Do not shear a red dogwood bush hedge with hedge clippers. Red Osier Dogwood is an attractive ornamental shrub native throughout North America. Its small heads of white flowers and white berries are decorative in their season, but it is for the bright red bark of the new growth that the plant is usually grown. Most noticeable in winter, the red stems are still conspicuous among the green leaves during spring and summer. Since the older branches have less vivid color, pruning is often used to force new growth as well as to control the size of the shrub. Pruning For Color And Grace Decide on your main goal in pruning. Do you want a ten foot tall screen of stems? Do you want a few main branches and many small ones? Do you want a small bush with intense coloration? For a screen, you'll be cutting stems back part way to force them to bush out. If you want more of a tree shape, you'll chose a framework of trunks and cut back to those. To get the greatest number of bright new branches, you can cut the whole bush down to the ground each year. Red Osier Dogwood is an attractive ornamental shrub native throughout North America. If you want more of a tree shape, you'll chose a framework of trunks and cut back to those. Choose your places to cut, imagining the effect of each one. Dogwoods have two growth buds opposite each other at the base of each leaf and along each stem. When you make a cut above them, they both start growing in opposite directions, doubling the number of twigs. Take off one of the growth buds to shorten the branch without creating extra bushiness. For a screen, prune the branches back to a foot or two above the ground until you have the desired number of stems. Then remove only the tallest each year, back to the same height. For a framework, choose your best branches and prune back to those each year. Remove one of the buds of each pair to force the new growth in direction you choose. Choose your places to cut, imagining the effect of each one. For a screen, prune the branches back to a foot or two above the ground until you have the desired number of stems. For a small bush of new growth, cut the branches back to within three or four inches of the ground. Red Stem Dogwoods can be pruned at any time of the year, but early spring is best for production of vividly colored new stems. Topping the stems, rather than cutting out the tallest ones or pruning back to a preselected framework, results in awkward branches shooting off in all directions and spoils the attractive, graceful shape of the bush. By SF Gate Contributor Updated December 02, 2020 Few gardening decisions are worse than ones that force trees and shrubs into rigid, unnatural shapes. Such severe pruning compromises the health of most plants and may deprive them of their flowers and beauty. Appropriately pruning your red twig dogwood (Cornus sericea or Cornus stolonifera) to spread out, however, allows it to retain its arching branches and allows you to enjoy its brilliant-scarlet fall color. Prune your shrub annually to remove its oldest branches or once every few years to renew its color and to reveal its spreading shape. According to Missouri Botanical Garden, red twig dogwood is hardy in U.S. Department of Agriculture plant hardiness zones 3 through 7. Start with sanitized tools and be sure to sanitize your equipment between cuts. Knowing when red twig dogwood pruning is appropriate is the first step in proper pruning. Cut back one-third of the oldest branches to the ground in late fall, midwinter or very early spring. Use sharp clippers for branches 1/4 to 1/2 inches in diameter and sharp lopper pruners for branches more than 1/2 inch in diameter. The oldest branches are the thickest and tallest of the shrub's branches, and they may be darker in color than the other branches. Remove branches that touch the ground, cutting red twig dogwood to the ground, at the bush's base. Those branches interfere with the dogwood spreading out, can pick up fungi and bacteria from the soil and can cause disease to spread. Therefore, red twig dogwood pruning should also focus on eliminating the spread of disease. Cutting red twig dogwood to the ground, at least when it comes to cutting older, black branches, or those with leaves that lost their color, can be done in the spring if you did not prune earlier than that. In most cases, cutting dogwood bushes is not necessary in the summer. When cutting dogwood bushes in the spring or fall, you should also take the time to prune any parts of the plant that are dead or diseased. This not only will help your plant conserve energy and put more of its reserves into its healthier parts, but it can also prevent disease from spreading to nearby plants. Red twig dogwood pruning can be more aggressive every now and then. Cut all branches to the ground in early spring once every two to three years as an alternative to annual pruning. According to the University of Illinois Extension, pruning can also be done once the plant goes dormant in the fall. Whichever option you choose, pruning regularly will renew the entire dogwood and allow new branches to spread more completely. Things You Will Need Sharp clippers Sharp lopper pruners Cutting red twig dogwood to the groundgives newer, healthier branches the space to spread out completely. Plant red twig dogwood in U.S. Department of Agriculture plant hardiness zones 3 through 7 in either full sun or partial shade. The shrub does best with regular water, at least once a week during warm weather, and tolerates a range of soil types but prefers damp locations. Red twig dogwood can contract leaf and twig blight. So it's important to disinfect your pruners and clippers with rubbing alcohol as a regular practice to discourage the spread of diseases. Scale, leaf miners and bag worms sometimes infect red twig dogwood. Discourage them by removing debris from around the shrub, using sticky traps to catch leaf miners and encouraging parasitic wasps and lady beetles to control scales. Cornus (commonly known as Dogwood) is a genus that encompasses both deciduous trees and shrubs, the group reaching between 30 and 60 species. They can reach between three and four meters in height and with exuberant foliage. In addition, all produce as a fruit a fleshy drupe, which in some species is edible, and in others becomes toxic for consumption. They are bushes that are widely used in gardening, so in this article we will see everything about pruning Cornus or Dogwood (including the popular dogwood red twig), how and when to do it, what tools to use and more.Curiosity: you certainly know that the most popular name by which these trees and shrubs are known is dogwood, but do you know what the name is due to? It is derived from “dagwood”, this because it has very thin and hard branches, with which daggers were previously made. Many other uses were also given to its very good wood, such as loom shuttles, handles for all kinds of tools, and any item requiring hardwood.1. Best-known varieties of Cornus or DogwoodAmong the cornus varieties there are quite different from each other, to reflect it, I will leave you here five of the most recognized varieties. 1.1 Red twig DogwoodWithout a doubt, this is one of the most popular dogwood bushes, if you plant it in your garden you will have a shrub that grows between 6 and 9 feet, and that is very resistant to cold climates and droughts.Red Twig Dogwoods They are highly sought after because they offer beautiful white flowers in spring, and during the winter, far from losing their beauty, it shows its bare stems in a striking red color, which contrasts very well with any landscape.1.2 Flowering DogwoodsIt is a deciduous tree that can reach 33 feet in height with a development in width as much or more than in height, reaching 30 feet.They produce beautiful flowers with four petals that can be white, pink, or red. Flowering generally occurs between April and May.1.3 Yellow twig DogwoodsThe yellow dogwood is a deciduous shrub that grows about 8 feet tall and 6 feet wide. It has resistance to a wide variety of climates, including intense droughts.The most distinctive features are its deep green foliage, which turns reddish in the fall, and especially the color of its branches in winter, which change from green to bright yellow.1.4 Common Dogwood The common dogwood is a deciduous shrub that develops between 7 and 20 feet, its branches are greenish brown and green, oval-shaped leaves.Although it prefers heat and sunny places, it can develop in shade or semi-open. In nature it is very found in mountain areas.1.5 Canadian Bunchberry Unlike the four varieties we have just seen, Cornus canadensis is a creeping plant that does not reach a foot in height. It is a sub shrub characterized by its slow growth, with white flowers that arrive in mid-summer.2. List of tools for pruning Cornus or DogwoodAs varied are the different dogwoods as the number of tools you can select to perform the pruning. Select the appropriate one according to the size of the plant, its age and the type of pruning it will perform.Hand Pruning Shears: Stems up to half inch in diameter can be pruned with hand shears.Lopping Shears: It is suitable to use on stems between half inch and 2 inches in diameter.Hedge Shears: Manual and power shears are available for trimming hedges. Manual shears have long, flat blades with relatively short handles and are good for small jobs. Electric shears are a good choice for larger hedges.Saws: A number of pruning saws are available. These saws come with either curved or straight blades and of variable lengths and points. Curved blades that cut on the draw stroke are easy to use.Never forget the importance of disinfecting your tools before and after work. This will prevent the spread of disease from plant to plant, aiding the overall health of the garden.3. How to prune Dogwood / CornusTo carry out an analysis of how to prune a cornus or dogwood, and taking into account the great variation from one type to another, we will divide this section into shrubs and trees.3.1 Cornus shrub pruningWe begin with the pruning of the varieties of shrubs, since they present less difficulty than those of the tree type. It will be a task that you can easily perform with any hand scissors.Basically, you must differentiate two ways to carry out this pruning:Cut year after year a third of all the branches within a couple of centimeters of the ground, leaving the rest of the branches uncut. With this pruning method we ensure a good flowering, but at the same time all the branches that we do not cut will acquire a much less intense coloration than the new shoots.In the previous method, we prioritize flowering over the coloring of new stems, in this method it will be the other way around. All branches should be cut a few centimeters above ground level (as shown in the photo). In this way, the flowering is renounced, but we make sure to have new branches of intense color the following winter.Image source: eljardindelaalegriaenmadridPersonally, I prefer the second method, and that is that for flowering plants there are hundreds of options, but if you are going to have a dogwood in your garden, you should enjoy its colorful stems in winter.3.2 Dogwood tree pruningLet’s see now what you should consider when pruning your cornus tree, you will see that it is not so complex. ☺The tasks that should not be missing in the pruning of these plants are the following:You should start by cutting all the wood that is dry. It correctly analyzes all the foliage to detect all that wood that is dry or in the process of drying. It is important that you eliminate it because from here they are points where the fungi begin to grow, which can end up spreading to other parts of the plant.Just as or more important than cutting the dry branches of your dogwood is removing those that are sick or infected with a pest. The sooner you cut these types of branches, the less time the tree will be at risk of having a major disease or infection.Eliminate all those branches that are too old and do not have the strength to develop properly.If you observe areas where the foliage is too dense, you can perform selective pruning to decrease this density.There are many varieties of dogwood that are grafted, in this case you must be careful to cut all the shoots that are born under the graft.Finally, the beginning of summer is a good time to prune and stimulate flowering. The idea with this pruning is to do a small pruning on the tips of the buttons to redirect the energy to the flower buds. You can do this with scissors or pinch the tip of the bud with your hands.Up to this point, we have seen everything related to the pruning method, let us now see the appropriate moment in which it should be carried out.4. When to prune Dogwood / CornusDefining the right time to prune your dogwood will depend on factors such as pruning type and variety. In general we can distinguish the following:In cornus trees, pruning of green branches should be carried out at times when the development of the plant is latent (autumn / winter). If it is about cutting dry and diseased branches, it is not necessary to wait a specific period, you can cut them whenever you want and, in case of illness, the sooner the better. Finally, pruning to promote flowering should be done in early summer. In the case of dogwood bushes, pruning should be done in late winter, before the plant begins to shoot the first shoots. Although in case of pruning dry and diseased branches, as with trees, you can do it whenever you want.These are generalities, since the exact moment can vary from one area to another, the experience of the gardener is often useful in specific cases.5. Pruning cornus / Red twig Dogwood videoAs with every article in this blog, we like to end it with a video, from which you can see graphically all or part of what has been explained so far. For this occasion, we have taken a very good video from the Get Growing with Gary Heilig channel, I have no doubt that it will be very useful to see it. ☺ we have tried to cover everything related to pruning the cornus or commonly known as dogwood, I hope you have found the information you were looking for.

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