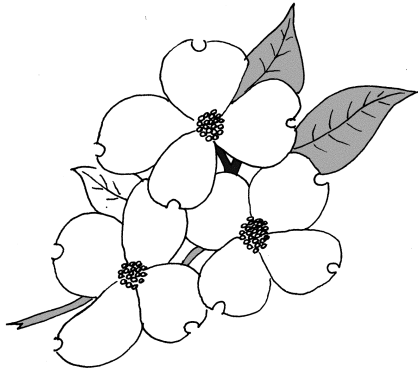


# State Flower –Dogwood

## Series: Symbols



It may seem odd, but our state flower is also a tree. The dogwood has been North Carolina's favorite flower for more than sixty years. Here are a few interesting facts about the flower that is a tree—or vice versa

The dogwood was almost *not* our state flower. The daisy gained support in the 1930s, but the bill proposing it as state flower was defeated eventually. Later, the dogwood beat out the flame azalea at the last minute. The legislature passed a bill making it official on March 15, 1941.

The bark of *Cornus florida*, the flowering dogwood, was often used to treat dogs with mange. This may explain how the tree got its name. (How can you tell a dogwood tree? By its bark!)

The petals of the dogwood are actually leaves, called bracts, which surround a cluster of about twenty tiny yellow flowers. As the flowers open, the showy white, pink, or red bracts expand and attract insects for pollination.

The wood of the dogwood tree was used to make weaving shuttles for the textile industry. Nearly 90 percent of the dogwoods harvested in the 1800s went toward this use. The durable wood wore smoothly and did not crack under the strain of high-speed continuous use.

Dogwood trees begin to show their fall colors as early as September, well before other trees in our region. The colorful leaves of the dogwood are believed to help migrating birds spot the tree's red berries, which give them energy for the trip south.

American Indians used dogwood trees to make arrows, daggers, and toothbrushes. They also planted corn when the trees bloomed.

When supply lines to the South were cut during the Civil War and quinine was no longer available for treating malaria, an extract from dogwood bark was used as a substitute.

The roots of the dogwood can be used to make a scarlet dye.

The dense, hard wood of the dogwood tree has a high resistance to shock. This makes it an ideal choice for the heads of golf clubs and the handles of chisels.

An American Indian legend tells of a beautiful Cherokee princess who was slain by the jealous brave whose suit she had refused. As the maiden lay dying, she picked up a dogwood blossom and used it to soak up her blood. This is why there are stains on the tips of each petal. The red dogwood, called the Cherokee, bears its color in memory of the girl.

Since the late 1970s, a devastating disease called dogwood anthracnose has been infecting dogwoods in North America. This fungal disease can kill a tree in as little as two to three years!

A North Carolina law protects wild dogwood trees from damage or removal.