*Cornus kousa* - Kousa Dogwood  (*Cornaceae*)

*Cornus kousa* is a multi-season small tree. Kousa Dogwood is noted for its early summer, long-lasting flowers, autumn fruits, good summer foliage and occasional autumn color, winter bark, layered branching, and vased habit.

**FEATURES**

**Form**

- small deciduous ornamental tree
- maturing at about 20' tall x 20' wide
- upright vased growth habit in youth, with branches becoming horizontally layered with age
- slow growth rate

**Culture**

- full sun to partial shade
- adaptable to dry soils, compacted soils, and neutral to alkaline soils; needs irrigation during the hot, dry periods of summer, to minimize leaf scorch, especially during establishment (ca. 3 yrs.)
- no serious disease or pest problems
- abundantly available
- much more pH adaptable to alkaline pH soils and is often more tolerant of dry soils than is Flowering Dogwood

**Foliage**

- opposite, broad elliptic, sometimes with undulating leaf margins, with the major leaf veins parallel to the curving leaf margins
- medium to dark green, to 3" long, often having scorched leaf tips and leaf margins by late summer if sited in full sun, and during prolonged dry periods
- autumn color ranges from an inconsistent reddish purple (in full sun) to green or yellowish green (in partial shade)

**Flowers**

- the true flowers are small yellow-green inflorescences centered among the 4, showy, white bracts, each obovate and distinctly acuminate, the entire inflorescence is about 3" wide
- inflorescences are prominently lifted above the stem and branch plane by 2" tall vertical peduncles
- flowering in June and early July, with a 4-6 week bloom period, including the early period when the bracts are small, lime-colored, and expanding

**Fruits**

- globose green fruits turn to pink, then dull red in Sept., resembling large solitary upright raspberries on a 2" peduncle (fruiting stalk)
- intriguing in contrast to the green foliage, but fruit set is usually light, sparsely scattered above the foliage, and readily eaten by birds and squirrels

**Twigs**

- tan to dark brown and very slender, with numerous lenticels
- vegetative buds are thin and conical, while the floral buds are pointed and oval, with the 2 floral bud scales slightly separated at the edge of the bud

**Trunk**

- multi-trunked, or single-trunked with low branching
- light brown-gray trunks are interrupted by smooth yellow-beige or dark gray-white blotches that make the bark rather ornamental with age
- bark becomes more mottled and ornamental if the lower branches of the tree are removed with maturity, exposing the lower trunks to more light

**Function**

- specimen, foundation, entranceway, border, understory, focal point, or seasonal accent small tree

**Texture**

- medium in foliage and medium-fine when bare
- thick density in foliage and when bare

**Assets**

- small ornamental tree with four-season appeal (foliage, flowers, fruits, bark, shape, and bark)
- very long-lasting and showy flowers, blooming in late spring and early summer
- ornamental bark with age
- superior disease/pest resistance among the showy Flowering Dogwoods

**Liabilities**

- not especially tolerant of urban stresses (but usually more so than Flowering Dogwood)

**Habitat**

- Zones 5 to 8
- Native to the Orient

**USAGE**

**SELECTIONS**

**Alternates**

- trees with showy flowers and ornamental bark (*Cercis canadensis*, *Chionanthus retusus*, *Cornus florida*, *Crataegus viridis* ‘Winter King’, *Syringa reticulata*, etc.)
- vase-shaped companion trees (*Prunus serrulata* ‘Rutban’, *Zelkova serrata*, etc.) or shrubs (*Euonymus alatus*, *Viburnum plicatum* var. *tomentosum* ‘Mariesii’, etc.)

**Cultivars - Variants - Related species**

- *C. kousa* 'Gold Star' - variegated foliage has a central golden stripe, which reverts to green by late summer
- *C. kousa* ‘Lustgarten Weeping’ - a weeping form often grafted onto a 2-5’ standard, spreading to 3’ high (above the graft) x 15’ wide, with flowers prominently viewed along the arching, pendulous stems
- *C. kousa* ‘Moonbeam’ - flowers 7” in diameter instead of the normal 3”
- *C. kousa* 'Satomi' - faded pink flowers
- *C. kousa var. chinensis* ‘Milky Way’ - much heavier flower and fruit production, and the most common cultivar
- *Cornus* ‘Ruthan’ Constellation® (PP7210) - white flowering hybrid of Kousa and Flowering Dogwoods, resistant to the borers and anthracnose that sometimes plague Flowering Dogwood
- *Cornus* 'Ruthan' Stellar Pink® (PP7207) - similar to the above hybrid, but pink flowering