



Conus mas: Cherry or Dogwood?

The answer is obvious, isn't it?

The European Cornel, the Cornelian Cherry, or Yellow Dogwood all refer to this native of Southern Europe and Southwest Asia. Just like the Witchhazels the Cornel has little competition for spring show. Dirr, in his Manual of Woody Landscape Plants, says "flowering when it does, it is a star; the classic case of being in the right place at the right time."

Also, like Witchhazel, the Cornel is usually multistemmed, reaching a height of over 20 feet and almost as much in spread. However, the cultivar 'Golden Glory' from Illinois is more upright in habit and very abundant in flower when compared to the species. This cultivar has, for the most part, replaced the straight species in the marketplace.



Of the family Cornaceae, the Cornelian Cherry bears abundant yellow umbels on its leafless stems, followed by four downy bracts. And in common with other Cornus, its abundant, cherry-red fruit is classified a drupe, or a stone-fruit, like cherry and plum. Although not quite as tasty it is still used for jams and wine. The abundance of its fruit is due to its superior ovaries, which is in contradiction to yet another of its names – the "Male" Dogwood.

To distinguish from the "Female" Dogwood, *C. sanguinea*, the European Cornel was named *Cornus mas* (short form of 'mascula' for masculine). The wood of the Cornel is strong and dense, used for tools and weapons, especially spears, as far back as 700 B.C. The name of the tree itself became synonymous with 'spear,' and eventually became known as corniolo in Italian (ergo, Cornus).

In 29 B.C. Virgil's writings on agriculture mentioned the grafting of "the pear transformed bearing engrafted apples, and stony cornels blushing on the plum (Georgics ii, 34). Virgil implies that this union of cornus and prunus resulted in the drupes of the cornel becoming red and more cherry-like.

The rest is history. You decide - cherry or dogwood?

JG – Plant Guy



Jeff Good

Christensen's Plant Center
6282 Gotfredson Road
Plymouth, Michigan 48170
(734) 454-1400 voice
(734) 454-1414 fax

[**Return To Archive**](#)

