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BOUTTE TREE, INC.

DOGWOOD ANTHRACNOSE

Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) is widely planted in home and commercial landscapes. Although popular for its early season display of flowers, and for its bright red berries in the fall, this plant is susceptible to a large number of diseases that vary in severity from those that merely disfigure the flowers and foliage to those than can kill the tree.

Symptoms

Initial symptoms are small purple-bordered leaf spots or larger tan blotches, especially on leaf margins.
Blighted leaves stay on the tree until fall and frequently remain on the twigs until spring. The fungus can spread to the twigs and, in some cases, to the trunk, causing brown, annual cankers. The fungi produce a mass of spores on infected leaves or bark and spread by splashing rain. The spread and development of the fungi are favored by cool, moist weather.

Control

Our control strategy is centered on cultural practices and fungicidal sprays. Maintenance of healthy, vigorous dogwoods is our number one priority. Pruning and disposal of diseased twigs and branches, removing epicormic branches that develop on the trunk and raking and disposal of leaves may be of some value. Pruning low branches on taller trees and thinning other understory plants to improve air movement may also help. Our prescription program uses the newest researched products to control anthracnose.

Cultural Practices

A healthy vigorous dogwood is better able to withstand infection from anthracnose than a weakened tree growing under stressful conditions. Maintain tree health through **proper watering**, **mulching**, and **fertilization**. Water during drought periods, but do not use overhead irrigation since this may increase the potential for disease infection and spread. Mulching to a depth of 2-4 inches can help maintain uniform soil moisture level, soil tempertures, as well as help protect trunks from mechanical injury; however, be sure to keep the mulch away from the tree trunk. Fertilize as needed, using a balanced fertilizer with fairly low nitrogen content for moderate growth. Rapidly growing, succulent twigs which have been stimulated by excessive fertility are more susceptible to anthracnose infection.
To avoid or lower the risk of dealing with this disease, consider using resistant varieties. The white flowering Kousa Dogwoods, *Cornus kousa* have shown good resistance and require less input to maintain a healthy tree.