**Scientific Name:** *Cornus canadensis* L.  
**Family:** *Cornaceae*

### Common Names:
bunchberry, bunchberry dogwood, creeping dogwood, pigeonberry

### Plant Description
Low herbaceous perennial forming colonies by spreading rhizomes; stems erect, simple, 8 to 18 cm long; leaves sessile, elliptic-ovate to obovate or rhombic, tapering to the base, 4 to 6 forming a whorl near apex, lower leaves reduced and in remote pairs, flower cluster on a short peduncle; bracts, or the involucre, white to cream, greenish when immature, ovate, 1 to 2 cm long; flowers inconspicuous (Gucker 2012).

### Fruit
Drupe bright red, 6 to 8 mm diameter, borne in clusters (Gucker 2012).

### Seed
Round, pale, 2 x 4 mm (Gucker 2012).

### Habitat and Distribution
Dominant forb under *Pinus contorta* in Alberta. Mesophytic, prefers moist conditions (Gucker 2012).

**Seral Stage:** mid to late stages.

Soils: Prefers acidic soils (pH 5.5 to 6.9) (Gerling et al. 1996).

Has no tolerance to salt (USDA NRCS n.d.).

**Distribution:** In parkland, boreal and montane regions of Alberta. Alaska, Yukon, western District of Mackenzie to Hudson Bay, Newfoundland south to California, New Mexico, South Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey (Gucker 2012, Moss 1983).

### Phenology
Plants flower in June; fruit ripens in August and September (Plants for a Future n.d.).

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**Inconspicuous flowers and showy bracts of *Cornus canadensis*.**

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**Cornus canadensis** - a. Entire plant showing growth habit  
b. fruit above the whorl of leaves  
c. flowering head  
d to e. flower details  
f to g. seed  
h. pollen.
Pollination
Insect pollinated by bumblebees, solitary bees, beeflies and syrphid flies (Gucker 2012). 
C. canadensis anthers are capable of catapulting their pollen into the air (2.5 cm in the air in a windless laboratory) which is said to assist in both wind and insect pollination (Whitaker et al. 2007).

Seed Dispersal
Dispersed by insects like ants, birds and rodents (Burger 1987).

Genetics
2n=22 (Gucker 2012).

Symbiosis
Shaw (1973) reported associations between Cornus canadensis and the following fungal species: Glomerularia corni, Phyllactinia guttata, Puccinia porphyrogenita, and Phyllosticta sp.

Seed Processing
Collection: Harvest by hand.
Seed Weight: 10.67 g/1,000 seeds (Royal Botanic Gardens Kew 2008).
Fruit/Seed Volume: 2,776 fruit/L average (2,776 seeds/L fruit).
Fruit/Seed Weight: 7,886 fruit/kg (7,886 seeds/kg fruit).

Aboriginal/Food Uses
Food: Fruit can be eaten fresh, but is unpalatable (dry and tasteless – Droppo 1987). Fruit can be added to jams, pies and puddings, particularly those of low-
pectin fruits, to increase pectin levels (Plants for a Future n.d.).

**Medicinal:** Tea can be used to treat a ‘sore heart’, possibly heartburn. Leaves and stems are analgesic and cathartic – tea being used for a variety of aches and pains (Plants for a Future n.d.). A strong decoction and strained root mash have been used as eyewash to treat sore eyes (Plants for a Future n.d.).

**Wildlife/Forage Usage**

**Wildlife:** Forage source for a variety of large ungulates, birds and rodents (Gucker 2012).

**Livestock:** Poor forage value for livestock (Gerling et al. 1996). Low palatability for browsers and grazers (Gucker 2012).

**Grazing Response:** Increaser/decreaser (Gerling et al. 1996).

**Reclamation Potential**

Highly fire resistant, long lifespan, re-sprouts.

**Commercial Resources**

**Availability:** Seed and plants are commercially available in Alberta (ANPC 2010). Seeds have been collected by the Oil Sands Vegetation Cooperative for use in the Athabasca oil sands region.

**Cultivars:** None known.

**Uses:** Ornamental ground cover (Gucker 2012).

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**Notes**

* *C. canadensis* is listed as 89% intact (less occurrences than expected) in the Alberta oil sands region (Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute 2014). The Cree call bunchberry *kawiscowimin*, meaning *itchy chin berry*, a reference to the rough surface of the leaves (Royer and Dickinson 1996).

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**Photo Credits**

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**References**


