

“Top Picks” For Native Plant Landscapes in Thurston County

WSU NATIVE PLANT SALVAGE PROJECT

EVERGREEN SHRUBS & FERNS for SHADY SPOTS

Low evergreen plants, such as **Evergreen Huckleberry** (*Vaccinium ovatum*), **Salal** (*Gaultheria shallon*), **Oregon-Grape** (*Berberis nervosa*—low, shade-loving and *Berberis aquifolium*—tall, sun-loving), and **Sword Ferns** (*Polystichum munitum*) play an important role during winter: They intercept stormwater, slow it down and allow it to percolate back into the ground. This reduces flooding—and all its problems—and recharges groundwater so that we have it during dry times (such as when salmon are returning in early fall).

In addition to protecting our water resources, these plants are beautiful additions to any yard and garden: Their glossy leaves add color throughout the year, they have lovely flowers, attract butterflies and birds, and provide cover for songbirds and small mammals.

EVERGREEN TREES

Our local evergreen trees are our most important defense against flooding from stormwater run-off. The expansive canopies of **Douglas-Fir**, **Grand Fir**, **Western Red Cedar**, **Western Hemlock**, **Shore Pine** and **Sitka Spruce** collect rainwater and slow it down.

Plus, their big roots keep soils open, which allows better percolation of rainwater back into the soil, and ultimately, back into our groundwater. Pick a large evergreen that fits your yard and soil/light conditions.

MIRACLE PLANTS

These common plants will do well just about **anywhere!** They’ll grow in sun to partial shade, and will handle a variety of soil types and moisture conditions. They’re all excellent for restoring habitats and enlivening urban yards. They’re also small enough that almost any yard has room for these beauties.

Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*) is a shrub or slender tree that grows 10-20 feet tall. Its clusters of showy white flowers in late spring are followed by attractive (and tasty!) dark purple fruits. It has pretty, delicate leaves and an attractive winter form with smooth bark and slender, curved buds. Arthur Kruckeberg says: “With superior foliage, flower, and fruit, our native serviceberry merits wider use in the garden. English gardeners learned about it a long time ago.”

Vine Maple (*Acer circinatum*) has a beautiful shape, fantastic fall foliage, and deep red/lime-green twigs. A great small tree all year round!

Western (Beaked) Hazel (*Corylus cornuta*) has lovely fuzzy leaves and pretty catkins throughout the winter that highlight the attractive zig-zag pattern of new buds. In late summer, look for the green-husked nuts that attract birds (the nuts are delicious to humans, too!).

Ocean Spray (*Holodiscus discolor*) has beautiful, distinctive leaves and creamy-white flower clusters—like a wave cresting. The seed heads persist all winter to brighten winter yards and feed the birds. Does best on well-drained sites in full sun to partial shade. Won’t tolerate saturated soils.

Red Elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*) is a fast-growing deciduous shrub with creamy pyramid-shaped flower clusters that become bright red fruit clusters. The flowers and fruit are attractive to a number of birds, butterflies, and small mammals. In winter, big green or purple buds and warty-textured bark add interest.

Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*) is a low-growing, bushy hardy shrub with delicate twigs and stunning white berries that last all winter long to add color to landscapes. It has small, lush foliage and pretty white or pink bell-shaped flowers. Especially great for stabilizing banks and as a low shrub to fill in around larger shrubs and trees.

Cascara (*Rhamnus purshiana*) is a small, slender tree that rarely grows over 30 feet. Its leaves are large, glossy, and dark green, with deep veins that give the foliage a lot of depth and vibrancy in even the driest summer. Small greenish flower clusters turn into shiny red to black berries that attract song birds to home landscapes.

(continued on reverse)

EDIBLE BEAUTIES

These common deciduous plants are good food sources for people, birds, and butterflies.

Red Huckleberry (*Vaccinium parvifolium*) has tasty tart berries that follow small pink bell-shaped flowers; its broom-like lime-green stems and bright pink buds are delightful in winter. Best planted in partial to full shade.

Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) is unique to our area and provides delicious, orange “blackberry”-like fruit in early summer. Its magenta flowers announce the coming of spring and serve as an early nectar source for our returning Rufous Hummingbird. Does best in moist places and/or partial shade.

Thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*) is our native raspberry and has no thorns! It has large, fuzzy, maple-like leaves and produces a tasty berry for humans and wildlife. The white rose-like flowers attract butterflies. Excellent for stabilizing sunny, dry slopes; won't tolerate saturated soils.

Native Roses. We have three roses native to our area: **Bald-hip Rose** (*Rosa gymnocarpa*), **Nootka Rose** (*Rosa nutkana*) and **Swamp or Clustered Wild Rose** (*Rosa pisocarpa*). Each occupies a different habitat, from full shade to full sun, wet to dry soils, and all produce beautiful pink magenta flowers that are followed by bright red hips that feed people and wildlife and brighten winter gardens.

Indian Plum/Osoberry (*Oemleria cerasiformis*) is a delight for the home landscape because it heralds the arrival of spring as early as late February! It produces large clusters of tiny white flowers that are followed by miniature plum-like fruits in early summer. Its winter form is beautiful, too, with shiny bark and large pink and bright green buds. Does best in partial shade or with morning light and afternoon shade.

Red-flowering Currant's (*Ribes sanguineum*) magnificent profusion of rosy blossoms, its erect form, and orangish-colored winter twigs make it one of the most prized native plants in local landscapes. It's more than beautiful—the flowers also attract hummingbirds and butterflies, and the berries provide a long-term food source for birds and small mammals. Best planted in full sun or partial shade.

WET-AREA SPECIALTIES

Black Twinberry (*Lonicera involucrata*) has unusual, yellow tubular flowers and glossy black fruits framed by bright maroon bracts. The flowers attract hummingbirds and the fruits are eaten by other birds. This plant will tolerate seasonal flooding, making it ideal for problem areas in some yards.

Pacific Ninebark (*Physocarpus capitatus*) has bright reddish-brown bark that enlivens winter landscapes. Its flowers are dense, round, white pompon clusters. It will take full sun to partial shade, and can take seasonal flooding. It also grows beautifully in relatively dry areas.

Red-osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) is widely used in restoration projects along streams, but also is beautiful in yards and gardens. It has beautiful fall foliage, pretty flowers and attractive fruits. But its most-appreciated feature is the bright red color its twigs display to add life to drab yards during the winter.

More plant habitat and identification information is available in our publications: “Grow Your Own Native Landscape” and “Winter in the Woods.”



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