OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE

GARDENING WITH OREGON NATIVE PLANTS

WEST OF THE CASCADES

CREDIT: Janet Donnelly, © Oregon State University

Oregon State University

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Growing a garden in Western Oregon is easier when you include native plants. That's because native plants are adapted to our wet winters and dry summers. Native plants also provide benefits to native pollinators and other wildlife. Read on to learn:

- Where to find native plants for your garden.
- How to choose and care for plants.
- Which plants are best for pots and small gardens.
- Where to turn if you want to learn more.

This publication also includes an illustrated list of Pacific Northwest native plants that are easy to establish and grow. NEW in this edition are:

- Updated scientific names.
- A section on supporting and understanding pollinators.

A wide variety of native plants — from trees to flowering shrubs, herbaceous perennials, ferns, annuals and groundcovers — are available for home gardens. In this publication, "native plants" are considered to be those found naturally at the time of European settlement in Northwestern Oregon, from the Cascade Range to the coast.

Western Oregon is part of a large ecological region that includes thousands of plants. Some plants have narrow ranges, while many plants extend south into California or north to Washington and Canada. A few, such as yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), have ranges that extend across the U.S. or even to Europe. Not all native plants are suitable for garden use. The few hundred that are most commonly used in garden settings are sometimes referred to as "ornamental."

Although this publication provides some basic plant choices, the "Resources" section includes many outstanding references.

Benefits of growing native plants

Pacific Northwest native plants grow under a wide range of garden conditions. Some are good accent plants; others are groundcovers. Many native plants tolerate summer drought. All are adapted to local climates and soils in their places of origin.

▶ Adapted to local soils and weather

Native plants have grown in our region for thousands of years. They are adapted to our regional climate — wet winters and dry summers. However, most native plants benefit from regular irrigation, especially during establishment. Keep in mind that some native plants are from moist woodland or wetland habitats. These may not tolerate drought. Also keep in mind that native plants may be adapting to a warming climate. That means some plants from southern Oregon or California may now be appropriate in parts of northwest Oregon.

Native plants in this publication are well-adapted to native soils often found in gardens west of the Cascades, since they already grow here in nature. But garden soil often is not "native" soil, since it may have been altered during construction and by gardening. Your soil may need amendments.

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Why not plant it in a pot?

Did you know that you can grow some native plants on your patio in pots? Native ferns, Cascade Oregon grape, wild iris, alumroot and many others work well as potted plants.

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To attract butterflies, feed the caterpillars

Be proud of the holes in your leaves! This is especially true if you grow plants attracting butterflies or moths, since leaves are the food source for the caterpillar stage of their life cycle. Sometimes butterflies and moths will choose only one or a few native plants to support their reproduction. These plants are often called butterfly hosts.

CREDIT: Erik, stock.adobe.com

More from OSU Extension

For more on pollinator gardening, see:

- *Enhancing Urban and Suburban Landscapes to Protect Pollinators*, EM 9289, https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/em9289
- *Native Plant Picks for Bees*, EM 9363, https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/em9363

Native plants provide habitat and food for birds, such as this rufous hummingbird sipping nectar from red-flowering currant. CREDIT: Mikul, CC 2.0

Garden soil types and climates vary greatly, so a particular native plant may or may not be appropriate for the conditions or microclimates in your garden. As in gardening in general, choose the right plant for the right place.

▶ Wildlife value

Native plants provide habitat for birds, small animals, amphibians, reptiles and insects. This habitat is important for feeding, reproduction and protection from the sun, wind and predators. Generally, wildlife of all kinds require food, shelter and water.

Flowering shrubs, trees and herbaceous plants provide nectar for hummingbirds and many types of insects. Seeds and berries nurture birds and other wildlife. Shrubs and trees provide shelter and nesting sites for birds, squirrels and other creatures. Other plants serve as hosts (food sources) for the caterpillar stages of native butterflies and moths, or as nectar sources for adult butterflies, moths or other insects. For more information, see the plant list and "Gardening for wildlife" and "Butterfly host plants" in "Resources."

▶ Importance to pollinators

Many gardeners enjoy watching pollinators. Some may wish to build a garden designed to attract butterflies, hummingbirds and bees. Pollinators are important not only for many ornamental plants but also for wild areas and agricultural success.

Many kinds of pollinators — hummingbirds, bees, beetles, butterflies, moths and other insects — visit many different kinds of flowers looking for nectar and pollen. In the process, they move pollen from one plant or flower to another, sometimes resulting in pollination. In this way, pollination benefits both the plants and the pollinators. Because of this, be cautious when using any kind of pesticide that might harm the pollinators.

To create a native pollinator garden, choose from plants that support pollination. To feed pollinators all season long, plant a variety of flowering plants that bloom at different times of the year. If you use several plants of one kind, find multiple sources; this may extend the bloom time because they might each derive from different genetic stock.

▶ Noninvasive in wild habitats

Finally, Pacific Northwest native plants are already established in balanced, local ecosystems, so they have little or no potential to become invasive pests in our wild and natural areas. Check GardenSmart under "References" to find alternatives for some species that are invasive in Oregon.

Plant selection

Selecting native plants for your home landscape is essentially the same process you would use for selecting any garden plant. Match your plant list with conditions already existing or easily created in your garden.

- **Determine the kinds of plants you are looking for.** Your existing garden may be spacious, or you may live in a newer urban area where garden spaces are sometimes smaller. Don't be daunted — there are native plants suitable for a wide variety of urban and suburban settings. Consider your wishes and needs for trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials and groundcovers. List your favorite garden colors. Decide whether you want deciduous or evergreen trees and shrubs. Consider whether you are creating a new garden, such as a woodland garden, or adding native plants to an established garden. If one of your goals is to attract wildlife, choose plants to support this goal. Consider whether drought tolerance is important.
- **Examine your garden conditions.** Is your site sunny, or is it shady or partially shady? Check the condition of the soil. Does it need amending or additional mulch? Within your garden, you may have many different kinds of conditions; try to match your desired plants to individual places in your landscape. Timing of sun and shade in your garden may also be important. For example, garden sites with morning shade and afternoon sun may need sun-tolerant plants.

- **Determine appropriate plants.** Look through the following list of plants to find those that might suit your purposes. Many native plants, especially shrubs, can grow quite tall and broad. Others may spread underground. Be sure to check out the mature size before planting. To learn more about individual plants or to find additional choices, see "Resources." Make sure each plant's requirements match your garden's available space and conditions.
- **Find photographs of the plants to help you understand how they fit into your garden preferences.** Two excellent sources of photographs for most of the trees and shrubs listed are Oregon Flora, https://oregonflora.org, and a website developed for horticulture students at Oregon State University, https://landscapeplants.oregonstate.edu.

Plant breeders have developed cultivars, or varieties, of many Pacific Northwest native plants. Cultivars offer specific plant characteristics, such as flower color or plant size. A note in the plant descriptions below will identify species which may have cultivars available. However, new cultivars continue to be developed, so the notes will not be complete. If you want specific cultivars or varied color forms, consult the references.

In some cases, species native to Oregon are widespread in other areas as well. Different forms of these species are native in different areas, so a particular form might not be native to Oregon. For example, bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) is native to many regions of the United States. Other widespread species include red-twig dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), Oregon sunshine (*Eriophyllum lanatum*) and ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*).

If you wish to use local forms, you will need to know the origin of cultivars or plants you choose. Plant sellers often have this information. In the case of ponderosa pine, it is important to use locally adapted plants, such as the Willamette Valley form. These forms perform better in the wetter soils west of the Cascade Mountains than ponderosa pines native to the east side.

Finding plants

Many nurseries stock native plants. Once you know what plants you are looking for, make a list and carry it with you when you visit nurseries. Many larger retail nurseries have native plant sections; others mix native plants with those of other origins. When you shop, consider asking about native plants before you begin looking around for them. A few nurseries specialize in native plants. You may be able to find a native plant nursery near you. Or, check out seasonal public sales by local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and other government and private conservation organizations. See "Resources."

You may wish to propagate your own plants. Many native plants can be propagated from seeds or cuttings.

Establishment and care

Gardeners sometimes assume that native plants can fend for themselves. But once these plants are part of a tended garden, they are no longer in a natural setting and require some care to perform their best.

Consider the mature size of plants when selecting them for your landscape. Look for photos that help you understand how they will fit into your landscape. CREDIT: Linda McMahan, © Oregon State University

- **Consider adding organic matter.** Good soil promotes plant growth. Soil containing adequate organic matter and nutrients will promote better growth of all garden plants. Soil qualities can change dramatically, even within short distances. Soil can range from clay-like, to wet soils to sandy types. If your soil has not been improved — particularly if you are working on a new construction site — add organic matter. If your soil is clay-like or sandy, work in 1 to 4 inches of organic matter to increase soil fertility and improve soil texture.
- **Water plants during establishment.** Even native plants require water to become established. A good guideline is to water the natives at the same time as the rest of your plants for the first year. If possible, plant during the wet season — typically fall to late winter or early spring. This allows the roots to become better established before the dry season. After the plants are established, water perhaps once or twice a month. It may take a year for perennials and two or more years for shrubs and trees to become established.
- **Be sparing with fertilizer.** The amount of fertilizer you supply for other perennials and woody plants may be too much for native plants.
- **Be patient.** Some native plants take longer to establish than more traditional garden plants, as they have not been bred for garden conditions.

▶ Pay attention to special requirements

- **Woodland plants** may require rich, moist soil. Plants that naturally grow in woodlands, especially in the foothills or mountains of the Coast Range or Cascade Mountains, may require moist soil with high organic matter content. An example is *Heuchera micrantha*, a kind of alumroot. Some varieties do best in moist, rich, well-drained soil. This is also true of native trillium (*Trillium ovatum*).
- **Native alpine plants** from mountain areas or plants from coastal areas may need special garden conditions. Native plants from mountainous or seashore regions often require good drainage to survive in a garden. To increase soil drainage, use sandy or rocky soil or add pumice. You might have more success with these plants by constructing a rock garden, growing them in containers with drainage holes, or using raised beds. If you are interested in growing native alpine plants, many excellent resources on their culture and care are available. See, "Rock gardening" in "Resources."
- **Wetland plants** need special conditions. Many wetland plants need wet soil, such as a water garden, to survive in cultivation. Others, especially those that grow in seasonal wetlands, such as camas (*Camassia* sp.), yellow monkeyflower (*Mimulus guttatus*) and flowering crabapple (*Malus fusca*), can grow under a wide variety of garden conditions, so long as they do not dry out during the winter and spring.

Plant combinations

This plant list contains information about some of the native plants appropriate for home gardens and landscapes. This list contains plants that are relatively easy to grow and available locally. Review the comments for problem solvers. Wildlife value, when known, is indicated. Following are a few possible combinations suitable for the novice gardener.

▶ Woodland garden

Enhance a shady spot with one or more vine maples, an early-flowering large shrub such as osoberry, six to nine sword ferns, a tall summer perennial such as goatsbeard, some self-seeding fringecup, a swath of Pacific bleeding heart, a few trillium, alumroot and a groundcover of native violets or wood sorrel.

▶ Sunny native mixed border

Mix brightly flowering shrubs such as blue blossom, red flowering currant, oceanspray and mockorange. Add more color with native iris, blue-eyed grass, camas bulbs and Oregon sunshine. Use a groundcover of wild strawberry or bearberry.

▶ Butterfly garden

Provide both nectar and host plants (food plants for caterpillars) by featuring mockorange, western azalea and Nootka rose under a bitter cherry tree. For added color in the sunny spots, try Cascade penstemon, stream violet, Douglas aster, goldenrod and a groundcover of coastal strawberry.

▶ Small urban garden

Add one small tree such as vine maple or western crabapple if space is available. Add shrubs like western azalea and evergreen huckleberry. Fill in with smaller plants like sword fern, bleeding heart, native violets and iris, all planted between pavers for separation and viewing up-close. Feature shrubs or smaller plants by planting them in pots.

▶ Streamside landscape

Plant some trees such as alder or western crabapple and some large shrubs such as red-twig dogwood. Complement them with Douglas spirea, sword fern, inside-out flower, native violets, and iris or wood sorrel.

PLANT KEY

Use the plant descriptions and the icons below to site the right plant in the right place.

LIGHT


Full sun


Part shade


Shade


Part shade or shade


Full sun or part shade


Full sun, part shade or shade

MOISTURE REQUIREMENTS


Dry soil


Moist soil


Wet soil


Moist or wet soil


Dry or moist soil


Dry, moist or wet soil

WILDLIFE VALUE


Bees


Hummingbirds


Beneficial insects


Birds or mammals


Butterflies


Caterpillars

TREES

Photos by Linda McMahan unless otherwise indicated. © Oregon State University

Alder, red

CREDIT: Edward C. Jensen

OTHER COMMON NAME: Oregon alder

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Alnus rubra*

DESCRIPTION: Tall to medium-tall deciduous tree, 40–80 feet. Small, woody, conelike fruit. Beware of power lines overhead. Pioneer tree that grows well in poor or wet soils. Fast-growing, adds nitrogen to the soil. Bark looks white due to growth of lichens. Cultivars available.

Cascara

OTHER COMMON NAME: buckthorn

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Rhamnus purshiana*

DESCRIPTION: Small deciduous tree or large shrub to 30 feet. Silver bark. Black, berrylike fruit. Small, pale green flowers. Forest understory tree; prefers moist soil. Bark harvested for medicinal use. Leaves not as attractive when grown in cultivation as in wild habitats.

Cherry, bitter

CREDIT: tlhowes2012, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Prunus emarginata*

DESCRIPTION: Medium deciduous tree to 50 feet. Shiny, reddish- brown, peeling bark. Fragrant clusters of greenish-white flowers in spring. Bright red fall fruits. Bright yellow fall color. Beware of power lines overhead. Fast-growing tree. Shrubbier forms native to east of Cascade Mountains also available.

Douglas-fir

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pseudotsuga menziesii*

DESCRIPTION: Tall evergreen conifer 75–150 feet in cultivation. Deeply furrowed reddish-brown bark. Dark green to blue-green foliage with new growth in lighter shades. 2- to 4-inch hanging cones. Beware of power lines overhead. Suitable for home landscapes in spacious gardens when planted away from buildings. Cultivars available. Tree has become symbolic of the Pacific Northwest.

TREES

Oak, Oregon white

OTHER COMMON NAME: Garry oak

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Quercus garryana*

DESCRIPTION: Medium to tall deciduous tree to 100 feet or more. Deeply lobed, leathery, dark green, shiny leaves. Acorn fruit. Beware of power lines overhead. To prevent root diseases, plant in well-drained soil with little or no summer moisture. Slow-growing and very long-lived.

Madrone, Pacific

CREDIT: brewbooks, CC BY-SA 2.0

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Arbutus menziesii*

DESCRIPTION: Medium broadleaf evergreen tree, 30–75 feet. Smooth, thin, reddish-brown, peeling bark. Clusters of white to pink, urn-shape flowers. Small, bright orange-red berries. Beware of power lines overhead. A bold tree, but may be difficult to establish. Slow-growing and long-lived. Tolerates dry soil, requires well-drained soil. Drops litter year-round, which can be messy.

Pine, ponderosa

CREDITS: Edward C. Jensen (left), Linda McMahan

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Pinus ponderosa*

DESCRIPTION: Tall, evergreen conifer to 100 feet or more. Buff-colored bark textured like jigsaw puzzle pieces. 5-inch long, yellowish-green to dark green needles in bundles of three. Large cones. Beware of power lines overhead. Look for Willamette Valley or other forms from west of Cascades that tolerate soil moisture. Plant in well-drained soil. Do not plant close to buildings because of large size. Fast-growing and long-lived. Cultivars available.

Maple, vine

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Acer circinatum*

DESCRIPTION: Small, deciduous tree or large shrub with graceful arching form, 15–30 feet. Bright reddish-green bark. Leaves nearly circular in outline, bright yellow-green, some with reddish fall color. Fruits are samaras with widely spread wings. Arches nicely (twines) if grown in shade. Tiered branches resemble those of Japanese maple. Best grown in shaded setting; otherwise, needs additional water. Not a plant for hot, sunny, dry sites. Slow-growing. Cultivars available.

TREES

Crabapple, western

CREDIT: Br. Alfred Brousseau, Saint Mary's College

OTHER COMMON NAMES: Oregon crabapple, Pacific crabapple

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Malus fusca*

DESCRIPTION: Small deciduous tree or large shrub to 40 feet. Fragrant, white to pinkish- white flower clusters in spring. Yellow to reddish-purple fruits ripen late summer. Tolerates and requires wetter conditions, but can survive in most gardens. Can form thickets. Slow-growing.

Redcedar, western

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Thuja plicata*

DESCRIPTION: Tall evergreen conifer to 165 feet or more. Yellowish-green to deep green, frondlike foliage. Soft, reddish-brown bark, small cones. Beware of power lines overhead. Requires good drainage. Can be sheared for hedges. Crushed foliage has sweet odor. Casts a dense shade, but graceful and elegant tree. Many cultivars available.

SHRUBS

Azalea, western

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Rhododendron occidentale*

DESCRIPTION: Mid-height, multistemmed deciduous shrub, 6–8 feet or more. Flowers in summer, white to pale rose with yellow spots, fragrant with musky scent. From Oregon's southern coast. Selected color forms available. Species often used in azalea breeding programs.

Blueblossom

OTHER COMMON NAMES: California lilac, mountain lilac

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus*

DESCRIPTION: Large shrub or small tree, 6–20 feet; evergreen. Fine, lustrous foliage. Numerous clusters of pale blue to deep lilac-blue flowers in summer. Hardiest of the wild lilacs, fast-growing. If planted in wet spots, can be subject to disease. Cultivars available.

SHRUBS

Currant, red-flowering

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ribes sanguineum*

DESCRIPTION: Mid-height deciduous shrub, 8–10 feet or more. Many upright stems from the base. Gray-green leaves. Pendant, red flower clusters in late winter. Black fruit with powdery bloom. Flowers emerge before foliage. Rapid grower. Selected color forms and varieties available in shades of red, pink and white.

Dogwood, red-osier

OTHER COMMON NAME: red-twig dogwood

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Cornus sericea L. (C. stolonifera)*

DESCRIPTION: Mid-height, deciduous, multitrunked shrub or small tree, 6–16 feet. Reddish bark, flat-topped clusters of creamy white flowers, followed by white or bluish berries. Great for winter interest. Control size by cutting tallest trunks at base every 2–4 years. Vigorous colonizer. Look for native forms of this widespread species.

Elderberry, blue

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sambucus mexicana* (ssp. *P. avium*)

DESCRIPTION: Large, deciduous multistemmed shrub or small tree to 15 feet or more. Flat-topped clusters of yellowish-white flowers, followed by gray-blue, waxy, berrylike fruit with bloom. Tolerates dry sites. Fast-growing; will colonize. Edible fruits.

Elderberry, red

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sambucus racemosa*

DESCRIPTION: Large, deciduous, multistemmed shrub or small tree to 20 feet. Bushier than blue elderberry. Compound leaves. Pyramidlike, elongated clusters of creamy-white flowers followed by bright red berrylike fruit. Prefers moist sites. Vigorous colonizer.

SHRUBS

CREDIT: Edward C. Jensen

Huckleberry, evergreen

OTHER COMMON NAME: California huckleberry

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Vaccinium ovatum*

Mid-height evergreen shrub to 15 feet. Glossy, dark green leaves, bronze new growth. Profusely flowering. Small, pinkish-white, bell-like flowers in clusters, followed by shiny purplish-black fruit. Slow-growing. May require additional moisture during establishment. Good foliage for cut flower arrangements. Edible fruits. Cultivars available.

Huckleberry, red

OTHER COMMON NAMES: red bilberry, red blueberry

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Vaccinium parvifolium*

DESCRIPTION: Mid-height deciduous shrub, 3–12 feet. Thin, light, bluish- green foliage. Inconspicuous greenish flowers followed by salmon-colored to bright red berries in early summer. Plant in soil rich in organic matter such as composted fir bark. In nature, often found rooted in old stumps. Edible berries.

CREDIT: Willamette Biology, CC BY-SA 2.0

Manzanita, bristly

OTHER COMMON NAMES: hairy or Columbia manzanita

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Arctostaphylos columbiana*

DESCRIPTION: Large evergreen shrub 10–15 feet. Gray-green, hairy leaves. Reddish-brown, flaking bark. White, bell-like flowers followed by red fruits in summer. Good for south- or west-facing sites. Best in sandy, well- drained soils. Cultivars available.

Mockorange, western

OTHER COMMON NAME: Lewis' mockorange

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Philadelphus lewisii*

DESCRIPTION: Mid-height, multistemmed deciduous shrub to 10 feet. Masses of fragrant, bright white flowers in long clusters in late spring. To control size and keep flowers low on the shrub, prune oldest individual canes to the base after flowering. Highly recommended for the shrub border. Considered to be best ornamental mockorange in U.S. Cultivars available.

SHRUBS

Ninebark, Pacific

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Physocarpus capitatus*

Mid-height, multistemmed deciduous shrub to 8 feet or more. Leaves resemble maple. Small, white flowers in dense 2- to 3-inch clusters in late spring. Rose-brown fall color. Older stems have shredding bark. Best used in moist locations.

Oceanspray

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Holodiscus discolor*

DESCRIPTION: Mid-height, multistemmed deciduous shrub, 4–15 feet. Tiny, creamy white flowers in large, pendant clusters in June. Deeply lobed, pleasing foliage with golden fall color. Slow-growing when young; can be difficult to establish. To control size, prune largest stems at the base. Requires well-drained soil. Spent fruit remains on shrub until following season.

Oregon grape, Cascade

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Berberis (Mahonia) nervosa*

DESCRIPTION: Small, spreading, broadleaf evergreen shrub to 2 feet. Dull green compound leaves. Bright yellow flowers on long stalks, followed by blue fruit. Can be slow to establish. Slowly spreads, making an elegant tall groundcover for part to full shade. Edible berries.

Oregon grape, tall

OTHER COMMON NAME: shining Oregon grape

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Berberis (Mahonia) aquifolium*

DESCRIPTION: Mid-height, broadleaf evergreen shrub, 8–10 feet or more. Spiny, glossy compound leaves with bronze- copper new foliage. Clusters of golden-yellow, urn-shaped flowers. Blue fruit with bloom. State flower of Oregon. Edible berries. Many cultivars available, including dwarf forms.

SHRUBS

Osoberry

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oemleria cerasiformis*

DESCRIPTION: Small deciduous tree or large multibranched shrub, 15–20 feet. Pendulous clusters of green and white flowers emerge in late winter. Pendulous purple fruits by early summer. Can sucker from the base. Best used in informal or woodland gardens.

Rhododendron, Pacific

OTHER COMMON NAME: western rhododendron

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Rhododendron macrophyllum*

DESCRIPTION: Large evergreen shrub or small tree to 25 feet, usually shorter in cultivation. Reddish-brown, scaly bark. Leathery, shiny gray-green foliage. Showy white to pink flowers. Has classic look of rhododendron. May require additional water because of mountain or coastal origin. Cultivars available.

Rose, Nootka

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Rosa nutkana*

DESCRIPTION: Mid-height, deciduous thorny shrub to 10 feet. Large, solitary soft-pink flowers to 2–3 inches. Purplish, pear-shaped or round hips. Best native wild rose for gardens. Vigorous colonizer.

Salal

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Gaultheria shallon*

DESCRIPTION: Small evergreen shrub, 3–5 feet. Lustrous, dark green leaves. Pinkish showy flowers, purplish berries. Spreads underground to form thick colonies; often used as high groundcover. Edible berries. Good for dry shade.

SHRUBS

Serviceberry, western

OTHER COMMON NAME: saskatoon

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Amelanchier alnifolia*

DESCRIPTION: Large deciduous shrub or small tree, multitrunked, 10–25 feet. Attractive silver bark. Small leaves with yellow to orange fall color. Compact clusters of small, white flowers. Reddish-purple to black fruit. Slow-growing; can form thickets.

Silk-tassel, coast

OTHER COMMON NAME: wavy-leaved silk-tassel

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Garrya elliptica*

DESCRIPTION: Large evergreen shrub or small tree to 20 feet. Grayish-green, leathery leaves with wavy margins. 6- to 12-inch pendulous catkins in late winter. Native to southern Oregon coastal areas. Male plants considered to be more highly ornamental. Many cultivars available.

Snowberry, common

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Symphoricarpos albus*

DESCRIPTION: Medium shrub to 8 feet with tiny white to purple or pink flowers. Deciduous, bluish-green leaves. Spreads vigorously underground. Summer bloom.

Spirea, Douglas'

OTHER COMMON NAME: hardhack

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Spiraea douglasii*

DESCRIPTION: Mid-height, multistemmed deciduous shrub to 11 feet or more. Gray-green leaves with silvery white undersides. 3-inch pyramid-shaped clusters of purplish-pink to deep rose flowers fading to pink, then turning brown after seed production. Although it will survive in dry areas, Douglas spirea does best in moist soil. Vigorous spreader.

SHRUBS

Spirea, subalpine

OTHER COMMON NAME: mountain spirea

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Spiraea splendens (S. densiflora)*

DESCRIPTION: Small, multistemmed, deciduous shrub to 2 feet or more. Small, dark green leaves. Vivid pink to purple flowers in cauliflower-shape clusters. Requires moist, cool soil conditions.

GROUNDCOVERS

Kinnikinnick

OTHER COMMON NAME: bearberry

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*

DESCRIPTION: Prostrate, evergreen woody plant with long, trailing branches, 6–8 inches tall. Leathery leaves. White or pink urn-shape flowers. Reddish-brown berries. One of our finest groundcovers for full sun; forms creeping mats. Best in well-drained soil; tolerates sterile soils. Too much moisture and shade can foster fungal disease. Cultivars available; look for West Coast-named cultivars or native wild types.

Inside-out flower, northern

OTHER COMMON NAME: white inside-out flower

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Vancouveria hexandra*

DESCRIPTION: Deciduous herbaceous groundcover to 2 feet. Delicate foliage. Small, white, starlike flowers on stiff stalks in spring. Bright yellow color in late fall. Spreads underground; valuable as a groundcover for shade. Somewhat resembles epimedium.

GROUNDCOVERS

Strawberry, beach

OTHER COMMON NAME: coastal strawberry

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Fragaria chiloensis*

DESCRIPTION: Spreading evergreen groundcover to 9 inches. Thick, leathery, cloverlike leaves. White flowers, red fruits. Vigorous groundcover for sun; spreads by short, hairy runners. Very easy to grow. Edible berries.

Strawberry, wild

CREDIT: Walter Siegmund, CC 3.0

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Fragaria virginiana*

DESCRIPTION: Spreading deciduous groundcover, 2–5 inches. Gray-green or bluish-green, cloverlike foliage. White flowers, red fruit. Freely spreads by runners; easy to grow. Edible, tasty berries.

Strawberry, woodland

CREDIT: Science and Plants for Schools, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

OTHER COMMON NAME: woods strawberry

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Fragaria vesca*

DESCRIPTION: Herbaceous groundcover to 8 inches. Cloverlike leaves. White flowers, red fruit. Best wild strawberry for shade. Spreads by runners. Variegated form available. Prolific berry producer; edible, tasty fruit.

Wood-sorrel, Oregon

OTHER COMMON NAME: redwood sorrel

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oxalis oregana*

DESCRIPTION: Rapidly spreading groundcover, 6–8 inches. Cloverlike leaves. White or pink flowers, depending on the variety. Aggressive groundcover for areas where no other herbaceous plants are present. Prefers moist shade.

PERENNIALS AND FERNS

Alumroot, Pacific

CREDIT: tlhowes2012, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

OTHER COMMON NAME: small-flowered alumroot

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Heuchera micrantha*

DESCRIPTION: Herbaceous perennial 1–2 feet. Small, white flowers on stalk in late spring. Large basal rosette of leaves. Grows in moist shade. Selected color forms or cultivars available. Good for pot culture.

Aster, Douglas'

CREDIT: Signe Danler, © Oregon State University

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Symphotrichum subspicatum*

DESCRIPTION: Herbaceous perennial to 3 feet. Blue to violet flowers in late summer. Readily reseeds and spreads underground; can be aggressive.

Bleeding heart, Oregon

OTHER COMMON NAME: Pacific bleeding heart

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Dicentra formosa*

DESCRIPTION: Herbaceous perennial to 2 feet. Delicate, deeply cut foliage. Pendant, jewel-like, pale to dark pink flowers in spring. Dormant in fall and winter. Valuable garden plant. Best for moist shade. Can spread aggressively in a garden setting. Seed disseminated by ants. Selected color forms and varieties available.

Blue-eyed grass

CREDIT: Aaron Carlson, CC BY-SA 2.0

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sisyrinchium bellum*

DESCRIPTION: Herbaceous perennial to 16 inches. Grasslike leaves. Dainty blue to violet flowers with yellow eye in summer. Although it resembles a grass, blue-eyed grass is actually in the iris family. Considered to be the most ornamental of U.S. blue-eyed grasses. Reseeds readily; can be weedy in well-watered areas.

PERENNIALS AND FERNS

Camas

SCIENTIFIC NAMES: *Camassia leichtlinii, C. quamash, C. cusickii*

DESCRIPTION: Stately bulb, 1– to 3-foot-tall daffodil-like foliage. Purple, white or blue flowers in spring. Goes dormant by end of summer. Needs site with spring moisture and summer dryness. Does well in heavy soils. Self-seeds. Often wild collected, so seek cultivated source.

Checkermallow

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sidalcea* species

DESCRIPTION: Herbaceous perennial, 3–5 feet. Basal rosette of leaves with tall flowering stems. Attractive 1”-wide, pink, hollyhocklike flowers. Good for dry areas. Reseeds freely; easy to grow from seed.

Columbine, Western red

OTHER COMMON NAME: Sitka columbine

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Aquilegia formosa*

DESCRIPTION: Herbaceous perennial, 2–3 feet tall. Strongly resembling garden columbines, but has smaller red and yellow nodding flowers in summer. Self-seeds.

Deer fern

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Blechnum spicant*

DESCRIPTION: Delicate fern, 1–3 feet. Finely divided, deep green fronds from basal tuft, with spore-bearing fronds in center. Exquisite ornamental. Best in moist shade with regular summer water. Spreads slowly underground.

PERENNIALS AND FERNS

Fringecup, large

Tellima grandiflora

DESCRIPTION: Woodland herbaceous or semievergreen perennial to 3 feet tall. Leaves in basal rosette. Delicate flowering stalks of small, filigreed, pale cream or pinkish-white flowers, sometimes fragrant. Self-seeds prolifically; very easy to grow. Good in a woodland garden or as a groundcover.

Goatsbeard, sylvan

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Aruncus dioicus*

DESCRIPTION: Herbaceous perennial, 5–6 feet tall. Attractive fernlike foliage. Plumes of tiny white flowers in summer Resembles astilbe. Spreads slowly underground. Male plants have showier flowers; female plants self-seed prolifically.

Goldenrod

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Solidago* species, many native kinds available

DESCRIPTION: Herbaceous perennial, 1–2 feet. Bright yellow flowers in plumes. Reseeds freely and spreads underground. Can be too prolific in moist soils; can become weedy. Good choice for a meadow garden or flower border.

Iris, Douglas

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Iris douglasiana*

DESCRIPTION: Statuesque semievergreen perennial to 2 feet tall. Broader leaves than other native iris. Cream to deep purple flowers in spring. Considered to be one of the best native irises for home gardens. Needs spring moisture and summer dryness.

PERENNIALS AND FERNS

Iris, Oregon

CREDIT: Janet Donnelly, © Oregon State University

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Iris tenax*

DESCRIPTION: Herbaceous perennial, 10–14 inches. Violet to purple flowers, occasionally white or yellow, in spring or summer. Requires dry summer soil with only moderate water. Good for containers.

Monkeyflower, common

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Mimulus guttatus*

DESCRIPTION: Herbaceous perennial, sometimes an annual in colder climates, 2–3 feet tall. Rounded, smooth leaves. Yellow trumpet flowers, often with crimson or brownish-red spots. Does best in wet or watered areas in sun. Spreads rapidly underground.

Oregon sunshine

OTHER COMMON NAME: woolly sunflower

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Eriophyllum lanatum*

DESCRIPTION: Low-growing herbaceous perennial to 2 feet tall. Green or silvery foliage and stems, small leaves in rosettes. Bright yellow, daisy like flowers in spring and summer, each on single stalk. Needs good drainage. Growth form varies depending on origin. Lowland forms are taller and greener than mountain or Columbia Gorge forms, which are shorter and grayer.

Pearly everlasting

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Anaphalis margaritacea*

DESCRIPTION: Herbaceous perennial to 2 feet tall. Gray-green leaves. Heads of tiny yellow flowers, each with white bracts. Slow or rapid spreader. Everlasting flowers can be dried for flower arranging. Widespread species; cultivars available.

PERENNIALS AND FERNS

Penstemon, Cascade

OTHER COMMON NAME: coast penstemon

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Penstemon serrulatus*

DESCRIPTION: Herbaceous perennial with woody base to 4 feet. Glossy, serrated leaves. Blue to dark purple or violet flowers in summer. Good for perennial borders in full sun. Considered best native penstemon for gardens west of Cascades. May be short-lived, but self- seeds. Although drought tolerant, looks best in moist spot.

Stonecrop, broadleaf

OTHER COMMON NAME: spoonleaf stonecrop

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sedum spathulifolium*

DESCRIPTION: Short, evergreen perennial to 6 inches. Thick, succulent leaves, flattened or paddle-shape, in rosettes. Leaves bluish with red highlights. Short clusters of bright yellow flowers in late spring or early summer. Requires good drainage; suitable for containers. Easy to propagate by cuttings. Sometimes recommended as groundcover for sunny, dry areas.

Sword fern, western

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Polystichum munitum*

DESCRIPTION: Statuesque, evergreen fern, 3–5 feet. New foliage in March; retains older foliage through the winter. A favorite fern for landscaping. Tolerates dry shade. Can be kept smaller by trimming back older foliage each spring. Transplants easily.

Trillium, western

OTHER COMMON NAME: Pacific trillium

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Trillium ovatum*

DESCRIPTION: Herbaceous deciduous perennial to 2 feet. Large, white flowers, fading to pink, perched above a trio of wide leaves in spring. Requires moist soil. Often wild-collected, so seek cultivated source.

PERENNIALS AND FERNS

Violet, stream

OTHER COMMON NAMES: pioneer violet, yellow wood violet

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Viola glabella*

DESCRIPTION: Herbaceous, spreading perennial, 3–5 inches. Yellow flowers in early spring through summer. Delicate, slowly spreading plant that can be used as a groundcover, providing colorful spots in the shaded garden. Largest of native violets.

Yarrow, common

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Achillea millefolium*

DESCRIPTION: Herbaceous perennial to 3 feet. Finely divided fernlike foliage. Creamy white or sometimes pinkish, flat-topped flower clusters in summer. Good for dry areas. Sometimes used in herb lawn or ecolawn mixes and kept short by mowing. Look for native forms of this widespread species.

ANNUALS

Farewell-to-spring

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Clarkia amoena*

DESCRIPTION: Annual to 3 feet. Gracefully nodding buds opening to showy pink to rose-purple flowers in midsummer. Each four-petaled flower has dark spotted areas. Self-seeds.

Gilia, bluehead

OTHER COMMON NAME: globe gilia

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Gilia capitata*

DESCRIPTION: Annual to 3 feet. Delicate compound leaves. Pale lavender, small, ball-shape flower clusters in early summer Has taproot. Grows easily from seed.

ANNUALS

Poppy, California

CREDIT: stock.adobe.com

OTHER COMMON NAME: golden poppy

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Eschscholzia californica*

DESCRIPTION: Annual, sometimes a perennial in our area. To 2 feet tall. Grayish foliage, golden-yellow to orange flowers, sometimes white or cream. Self-seeds readily.

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Finding plants

Native Plant Society of Oregon. Native plant nurseries in Oregon (https://www.npsoregon.org/landscaping5.php). The larger website also provides information on membership and chapters where you can meet native plant enthusiasts and learn more about native plants. http://www.npsoregon.org/

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