

The Natural Way to Grow

Gardening with Native Plants of Eastern Washington



Washington Native Plant Society
Columbia Basin Chapter
<http://www.wnps.org/cbasin>



What are Native plants?

Native plants are those that were present in a particular region before the arrival of European Americans. The native plants found in eastern Washington evolved with local microorganisms, insects, and wildlife and are adapted to the local climate and soils.

Why Use Native Plants?

Hundreds of plant species are native to eastern Washington and many are interesting and beautiful enough to be used in garden settings. Using natives can benefit not only your yard or landscape, but can also help maintain the diversity of the local flora and fauna. Although large natural areas are better at supporting diversity, numerous small areas help too. Below are some of the advantages of using native plants:

Native plants:

- ♣ are adapted to our climate of wet winters and hot, dry summers
- ♣ require less water and generally less maintenance than non-natives once they are established
- ♣ improve water quality by needing less fertilizer and no pesticides
- ♣ provide shelter, food and pollination opportunities for native wildlife
- ♣ resist native pests and diseases better than non-natives, and may provide habitat for native beneficial insects
- ♣ save resources and encourage a sense of stewardship

Landscaping with Native Plants

Before you start designing your garden, you might want to take a walk through the desert in the spring. An easy and fun way to learn what the plants look like and get some design ideas is to go on a Native Plant Society field trip to look at wildflowers in the



spring. This will give you an idea of the types of plants that can grow in your garden soil. There are also several books and booklets that can help you identify the plants and what conditions they need to grow well; some of these are listed at the bottom of the brochure.

What are your goals in planting with natives? Are you trying to reduce your water use, provide native habitat for wildlife, or admire natives in your garden? If you are surrounded by desert areas, your landscape design can even use native plants and the natural spaces between them as a part of your fire break against wildfires.

Begin designing your native plant garden by walking around your yard evaluating the planting space. Is the soil sandy or does it contain a lot of silt and clay; is the area in full sun all day or shaded by your neighbors trees; or will the area get overspray from existing sprinklers or from drip lines you set in place? Group plants according to similar water, light and soil needs. If you choose plants suited to existing soil, water, and light conditions in your yard, they will thrive and you will have less work to maintain your beautiful garden. Keep in mind many perennial plants native to eastern Washington have deep roots—so you want to plan carefully.

Finding Native Plants for Your Garden

To help preserve our rapidly diminishing natural areas, don't collect plants in the wild. Native plants are gaining acceptance by gardeners and are becoming more common in the nursery trade. There are a few nurseries carrying eastern Washington natives and more are starting all the time. Web sites listed at the end of this brochure can provide up-to-date lists of these nurseries. If possible, choose plants grown from local seed stocks. Ask the nursery if they know where the seeds came from. Be aware of non-native plants that may be listed as noxious weeds in Washington too and avoid using them.

Planting Natives

Dig a hole large enough to allow the roots to hang straight down without curling back up. Fill the hole with water and let it drain before setting the plant in the hole, making sure the crown is at ground surface and firming the soil around the roots. A slight depression can be left around the plant, especially if you'll be using drip irrigation to provide water for plants needing more than nature will provide. Dryland shrubs, perennials and grasses can be planted in the fall or early spring. For spring planting, plant as early as possible and provide water through the spring to get them established. They will not need water after roots establish.



Caring for Native Plants in the Garden

Survival and growth of plants in eastern Washington depends strongly on their need for supplemental water. A rule of thumb is to provide the plant with water equivalent to that received in its natural habitat. Some dryland plants tolerate additional water better than others. The planting guide included inside this brochure lists some common species, their soil and exposure needs, and some of their characteristics.

A drip line or mini-sprinkler system is ideal, since the water can be directed to particular plants and not on the ground between plants. Reducing water between plants will also help reduce weeds.

Native plants require little attention, needing little if any pesticides or fertilizers. Some natives will reseed themselves in your garden. Periodic thinning can be used to maintain "order" if your native species reseed themselves more than you like. If a shrub is spreading by suckers, you can often control its spread by reducing the amount of water until the plant has enough water to survive without unmanageable growth.

Help Preserve Native Plants

Each of us can help preserve native plant species and habitat. You've already taken the first step by picking up and reading this brochure! Want to know more? Read on. Here are more suggestions on how to take action.

- ♣ Encourage others to plant natives in their yard and ask a local nursery to stock native plants
- ♣ Become active in your local chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society
- ♣ Share information with friends and neighbors about how native plants contribute to the vitality of the ecosystems of eastern Washington

- ♣ Tell our elected officials that you enjoy natural areas near our urban areas and that natural areas are beautiful
- ♣ Pull out a non-native invasive plant and plant a native in its place
- ♣ Volunteer to help control the spread of invasive weeds in your county - contact the county noxious weed control board to learn where you can help.

Some Useful Resources

These books and links will help you learn more about native plants in your garden and in the wild.

For a current list of nurseries, check our web page at <http://www.wnps.org/cbasin/> or <http://www.wnps.org/landscaping/nurserylist.html>

Books, Booklets, and Links

- M. Anderson, 1995. *Landscaping with Native Plants in Kittitas County*. Department of Natural Resources, WSU Cooperative Extension/Kittitas County, and City of Ellensburg project. Call DNR 1-800-523-8733 to request a copy.

- T. Fitzgerald and M.D. Terrell, 2000. *Landscaping with Native Plants in the Inland Northwest*. Washington State University, Spokane County, MISC0267.

- A.R. Kruckeberg, 1982. *Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA.

- R.J. Taylor, 1992. *Sagebrush Country: A Wildflower Sanctuary*. Mountain Press Publishing.

- Washington State Noxious Weed Board <http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/> for up-to-date lists of plants that shouldn't be purchased

- Native American uses of some native plants. <http://www.cwnp.org/ethnobotany.html>

Native Plants Available from Nurseries

Common Name	Botanical Name	Height	Soil Type	Exposure	Comments
Trees					
Western juniper	<i>Juniperus occidentalis</i>	20'	A	S	Evergreen, cinnamon to gray-brown bark
Ponderosa pine	<i>Pinus ponderosa</i>	100'	A, D	S	Long needles, orange-brown to brown bark, very tall tree
Quaking aspen	<i>Populus tremuloides</i>	30'	A, M	S, PS	Heart-shaped leaves flutter in wind, turn gold in fall
Chokecherry	<i>Prunus virginiana</i>	20'	A, M	S, PS	Large clusters of white flowers, red fruit in early summer
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus douglasii</i>	10-20'	A	S, PS	White flowers, small black fruit, can form thickets, thorny
Water birch	<i>Betula occidentalis</i>	25-50'	M	S, PS	Smooth dark reddish-brown bark
Garry oak	<i>Quercus garryana</i>	25-45'	A, D	S	Dark green leathery leaves, red in fall, acorns
Shrubs					
Sagebrush	<i>Artemisia tridentata</i>	2-6'	D	S	Gray-green leaves
Bitterbrush	<i>Purshia tridentata</i>	2-6'	D	S	Dark green leaves, yellow flowers in spring
Green rabbitbrush	<i>Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus</i>	2-3'	D	S	Green leaves, yellow flowers in fall
Gray rabbitbrush	<i>Ericameria nauseosa</i>	2-4'	D	S	Gray-green leaves, yellow flowers in fall
Purple sage	<i>Salvia dorrii</i>	2-4'	D	S	Minty smell, purple blossoms in spring into summer
Snowberry	<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	3-4'	A, M	S, PS	Pink blossoms in spring, white berries in fall
Snow buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum niveum</i>	1-2'	D	S	Pinkish-white flowers in fall, grayish-white foliage
Rock buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum sphaerocephalum</i>	1-2'	D	S	Yellow flowers in late spring, rounded shape
Mock orange	<i>Philadelphus lewisii</i>	5-12'	A, M	S, PS	Wonderfully fragrant flowers
Golden currant	<i>Ribes aureum</i>	6'	A, M	S, PS	Golden flowers and berries in spring
Nootka rose	<i>Rosa nutkana</i>	4'	A, M	S, PS	Pink simple roses, red hips in fall
Serviceberry	<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	8-20'	A, M	S, PS	Multiple stems, beautiful white flowers, small black fruit
Hazelnut	<i>Corylus cornuta</i>	3-12'	A, M	S, PS	Multiple stems, small edible nuts, catkins in spring
Red-osier dogwood	<i>Cornus stolonifera</i>	8-12'	M	S, PS	Multi-stemmed shrub, red bark in winter, white berries
Elderberry	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	10-15'	A, M	S, PS	Multiple stems, hanging clusters of edible blue berries
Sumac	<i>Rhus glabra</i>	8-12'	A, M	S	Divided leaves turn brilliant red in fall, red seeds form stalk
Kinnickinnick	<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	8-12"	A, M	S, PS	Evergreen groundcover, white flowers, red berries
Bunchgrasses					
Bluebunch wheatgrass	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i>	1-3'	A	S	Straight stems with dense seed heads, clump up to 1' across
Sandberg's bluegrass	<i>Poa secunda</i>	8-12"	A, D	S	Small clumps, stems twice as tall as leaf blades
Squirreltail	<i>Elymus elymoides</i>	1-2'	D	S	Tufted large seed heads look like a squirreltail
Indian ricegrass	<i>Achnatherum hymenoides</i>	1-2'	D	S	Seeds in a cloud above numerous fine leaves
Needle and thread grass	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>	2-3'	A, D	S	Tall with very thin leaf blades and long awns on pointed seeds
Sand dropseed	<i>Sporobolus cryptandrus</i>	1-2'	A	S	Greens up later in spring, loosely open seed head, sandy soil
Idaho fescue	<i>Festuca idahoensis</i>	1-2'	A	S, PS	Dense clump of fine graceful blue-green leaves, likes more moisture than some grasses
Basin wildrye	<i>Leymus cinereus</i>	4-6'	M	S	Very tall bunchgrass with wide leaf blades, with coarse seed heads
Perennials					
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	1-2'	A	S	Finely dissected leaves with white flowers in flattened head
Munroe's globemallow	<i>Sphaeralcea munroana</i>	1-2'	A	S	Orange flowers, gray-green leaves, blooms longer in gardens
Carey's balsamroot	<i>Balsamorhiza careyana</i>	1-3'	D	S	Large yellow flowers, green tough leaves
Oregon sunshine	<i>Eriophyllum lanatum</i>	8-18"	A	S	Yellow flowers, grayish fuzzy foliage
Hoary aster	<i>Machaeranthera canescens</i>	1-3'	A	S	Purple daisy flowers in the fall, reseeds readily, biennial, more compact plant in drier soil
Silky lupine	<i>Lupinus sericeus</i>	24"	D, M	S	Clusters of blue-white flowers above silvery leaves
Camas	<i>Camassia quamash</i>	18"	A, M	S, PS	Pale to dark purplish blue flowers
Thread-leafed daisy	<i>Erigeron filifolius</i>	18"	D	S	1" white to pale pink daisy flowers, thread-like leaves
Linear-leaf daisy	<i>Erigeron linearis</i>	12"	D	S	Yellow daisy flowers, leaves narrow and fuzzy
Showy penstemon	<i>Penstemon venustus</i>	24-30"	A	S	Large blue to lavender flowers
Lance-leaved stonecrop	<i>Sedum lanceolatum</i>	3-8"	D	S	Yellow flowers, succulent leaves
Bitterroot	<i>Lewisia rediviva</i>	2-3"	A	S	Pink large flowers in early spring, dormant in summer

A = adaptable S = full sun
D = prefers dry PSH = partial shade
M = prefers moist

Modified from "Landscaping with
Native Plants in the Inland Northwest"
By Tonie Fitzgerald

Sandy soil

Western juniper
Bitterbrush
Sagebrush
Purple sage
Rabbitbrush
Snow buckwheat
Sandberg's bluegrass
Squirreltail grass
Indian ricegrass
Needle and thread grass
Sand dropseed
Yarrow
Munroe's globemallow

Rocky soil

Ponderosa pine
Garry Oak
Western juniper
Sagebrush
Rock buckwheat
Bottlebrush squirreltail grass
Sandberg's bluegrass
Bitterroot
Lance-leaved stonecrop
Purple sage
Indian ricegrass

Moist soil

Quaking aspen
Chokecherry
Water birch
Mock orange
Golden currant
Red-osier dogwood
Idaho fescue
Basin wildrye
Yarrow
Showy penstemon