

Shore Stewards News

GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES FOR LIVING NEAR WATER | ESTABLISHED 2003

Spring 2018

This issue of Shore Stewards News focuses on the many benefits of native plants. The newsletter content is from garden writer and retired WSU Extension Educator Peg Tillery, and provided by Renee Johnson. Renee is the Shore Stewards Coordinator for Kitsap County. Island County content is provided by Ann Precup and Scott Chase.

Native Plants at Work in Your Landscape

Native plants are ideal for home gardens: at the same time they provide diversity to a landscape, they can also create a habitat for wildlife. Native plants are mostly disease and pest free and usually survive very happily in our relatively wet winters and springs with drought-like summer months from mid-July through mid-October most years. Native plants rarely, if ever, need fertilizer. In our region where fungi and molds happen naturally, native plants can have diseases and conditions, but they usually don't succumb to these problems. The various fungi and phytophthoras that attack our madrones are an example. Newly planted natives also need regular watering their first two to three years until they're established in a landscape.



Tall Oregon Grape *Mahonia aquafolium* Photo
Credit: <http://www.nwplants.com> / CC BY-SA 3.0

A few of the native favorites include: Oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*); Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*); Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*); Pacific Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*); Pacific dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*); Mock orange (*Philadelphus lewisii*); Pacific Ninebark (*Physocarpus capitatus*); twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*); Mahonia (Oregon Grape); Trillium; Red Huckleberry (*Vaccinium parvifolium*); Evergreen Huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*); Red Elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*); Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*); Vine Maple (*Acer circinatum*); Sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*), Bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*), Lady fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*) and Red-Flowering Currant (*Ribes sanguineum*). All of these plants provide great habitat (and food) for myriad creatures plus give continuous interest to our garden.

Planting Natives and Ornamentals Together



A lovely combination of Sword Fern, Salal, Japanese Maple, varieties of rhododendrons, Mountain Hemlock, and Douglas Fir.

Photo by Peg Tillery



Native plants blend in well with other ornamental plants. The trick (if there is one) to incorporating native plants, or selecting native plants, is to determine how much size (height and width) is available for the plants to inhabit. Trees can get very tall and wide and some natives can sprawl throughout the garden. It's also important to know what the particular natives' cultural requirements are (i.e. soil type, water requirements, sun/shade requirements). Remember, some native plants like dry rocky soils and others like moist, humus rich soils (like the duff in a forest). It's a good idea to visit a local park or nursery where natives are already in abundance to get an idea on which ones appeal to your particular tastes or will fit your particular site conditions.

Oregon Grape, Salal, Evergreen Huckleberry, Smokebush Cotinus, and Rhododendron.

Photo by Peg Tillery.

Salt Tolerant Trees and Plants

Most of our landscape plants are sensitive to salinity in the soil, especially young transplants and seedlings. Heavy winter rains can help remove this salt from the soil, thus reducing the damage from continued exposure, whereas periods of drought and hot weather increase the damage from exposure to the salty soil. There are other species that have adapted to salt spray and salty soil conditions over thousands of years. These we call “halophytic”, or salt-loving plants.

One of the most important things to consider when choosing a salt-tolerant tree is how large it will get. If you are planting a Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), for example, which has good slope erosion control, realize that it can reach up to 200 feet high. Maybe not in your lifetime, but it could still grow tall enough to block the view of the neighbors behind you. So that is something you should think about – as well as the impact the roots of the tree might have on your drainfield.

Other great native trees that are adapted to a shoreline location include the Pacific madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*), Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), Red alder (*Alnus rubra*), Western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*), Big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), Grand fir (*Abies grandis*), Western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), Pacific yew (*Taxus brevifolia*), Shore pine (*Pinus contorta*), and the Western white pine (*Pinus monticola*). Some of the better salt-tolerant shrubs and small trees to consider include Salal (*Gautheria shallon*), Ocean Spray (*Holodiscus discolor*), Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), Elderberry (*Sambucus species*), Tall Oregon grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*), Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), Nootka Rose (*Rosa nutkana*), and the Wax Myrtle (*Myrica californica*). This is by no means a complete list of all the trees and shrubs that do well along the shoreline.

Finding the Right Plant for You!

If you're working from a mandated list provided through a regulatory entity such as your homeowner's association, realize that these lists are sometimes very general to meet the needs of a wide range of conditions. You may wish to consult with an experienced landscape designer or architect who has knowledge and expertise in working with current rules and regulations. WSU Extension has volunteer Master Gardeners who can often answer your questions in selecting the right plant for your situation. The Washington Native Plant Society is another valuable resource whose mission is to promote the appreciation and conservation of Washington's native plants and their habitats through study, education, and advocacy (www.wnps.org). The Washington State Nursery and Landscape Association (WSNLA) maintains a list of Certified Professional Horticulturists who have a background in these matters. Visit www.wsnla.org for more. It's valuable to visit a nearby nature center, park or preserve, to see how native plants grow in your area.



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