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## LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVE PLANTS

Landscaping with native and adapted plants is referred to as “naturalized landscaping.” But natural landscapes don’t just happen by letting things go. Natural landscapes need to be designed, planted and managed. These less formal looking, natural landscapes, once established, require less watering, mowing and fewer pruning chores.

It takes 1-3 years for a natural landscape to establish, but then the native and adapted plants generally need less water and fertilizer than non-native plants. There are many non-native landscape plants that are quite well adapted to this area. These adapted plants, though they originated in a different area of the world, are hardy to our USDA Hardiness Zone 6 and can withstand our hot, dry summers.

If you are devoting an entire yard or garden area to natives, you’ll probably have to work at removing what is already planted in the area before establishing your native plant communities. More likely, you will be incorporating native plants into existing landscapes.

### **PUT THE RIGHT PLANT IN THE RIGHT PLACE**

If plants grow naturally in full sun and gravelly well-drained soil, then that is the kind of place they need to be in your yard. Conversely, if plants in the wild are woodland types that live in filtered light and organic soil, they need those same conditions in your yard. While it is possible to modify existing site conditions somewhat with soil amendments it is impractical to attempt this in very large areas. It is best to choose plants to fit the site.

If you are combining natives with other landscape plants, be sure to keep plants with similar water and soil requirements together. If dry loving, native plants (xerophytes) are mixed in with plants that require even moderate watering, the natives are likely to get root rot or sucker profusely and spread aggressively. Mixing natives with plants that need more water or soil fertility defeats the purpose of using native plants.

Your local County Extension Master Gardeners are a good source for information about native and adapted plants that are good for your area.

The Spokane Conservation District holds an annual Tree and Shrub Seedling Sale where the purchase of native and adapted plants is easy and economical. Native plants are also available in retail nurseries. These plants may look a little different from other nursery stock (they may not be leafed out or flowering at the time of sale), because they are grown locally. Don’t balk at purchasing these undeveloped plants though. The optimum time for planting any plant is before it leafs out. Native plants are generally available in a variety of pot sizes. Some trees may come in larger pots. Some are bareroot. Some seedlings come in tubes or “plugs” an inch or two in diameter and about eight inches long.

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