



Using Native Plants in Your Garden

Native plants provide benefits in home gardens by attracting birds and pollinators. These plants are already adapted to the local climate, soil, and ecosystems and positively impact wildlife. For this reason, they are used for restoration of protected wetland, riverbanks, prairies, savannahs and forests.



Large Camas.
Oregon State Library

What is a native plant?

- Only plants found in this country before European settlement are considered to be native to the United States.
- The word native should always include a geographic qualifier, for example, native to Western U.S. or native to Oregon.
- Many native plants have varieties selected and cultivated by humans while some originate as natural mutations on plants; others could be hybrids of two plants.

Choose the right plant and the right place

- Make sure it will be a good fit for your garden. Learn about the plant's native habitat (such as forest, wetland, etc.). Consider:
 - ◇ Light and water requirements.
 - ◇ Plant size at maturity.
 - ◇ How aggressively it spreads.
- Select plants that meet your priorities for attractiveness, pollinator support, and/or food and habitat for birds.

Caring for native plants

- To succeed, match what the plant requires (soil type and nutrients, sun/shade, moisture, cold/heat tolerance) to what your site offers – “right plant, right place.”
- Follow established procedures for planting, watering and pest monitoring.
- Expect that your new plant will need more attention until it is established.

Resources

- *Native Plant Glossary, 10-Minute University™* handout, <https://cmastergardeners.files.wordpress.com/2022/02/native-plant-glossary.pdf>
- *Top 10 Oregon Native Plants for Pollinators*, Garden Ecology Lab, Oregon State University <https://blogs.oregonstate.edu/gardenecologylab/category/top-10-plants-for-pollinators/>
- *Gardening with Oregon Native Plants West of the Cascades*, OSU Extension Publication EC1577 <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/ec1577>
- *Native Plants for Willamette Valley Yards*, <https://www.oregonmetro.gov/native-plants-willamette-valleyyards-booklet>
- *Bring More Birds to Your Home with Native Plants*, Audubon Society searchable data base <https://www.audubon.org/native-plants>

This handout is adapted from “Using Native Plants in Your Garden,” presented by 10-Minute-University™ Clackamas County Master Gardener™ Association.

More information



**Garden-worthy native plants**

These Oregon native plants have been selected by seasoned nursery professionals and garden designers for their superior aesthetic quality, good behavior in the garden, and availability in local nurseries.

Small Trees & Shrubs

Common name <i>Scientific name</i>	Height, width at maturity	Location	Characteristics
Vine maple (<i>Acer circinatum</i>)	20 ft. tall and wide	Full sun to deep shade	Multi-stemmed deciduous tree; better fall foliage colors in sun; drought tolerant when established
Western serviceberry (<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>)	To 20 ft.	Sun to part shade in ordinary garden soil, prefers summer moisture	Deciduous tree/shrub; fragrant white flowers produce edible fruits
Coast blue blossom (<i>Ceanothus thyrsiflorus</i> 'Oregon Mist')	To 15 ft.	Full sun; average, well-drained soil, little to no summer water when established	Small deep green leaves and soft turquoise flowers in late April to early June, prune after blooming,
Pacific wax myrtle (<i>Morella californica</i>)	10-12 ft. tall	Sun to part shade; tolerates damp locations and summer drought	Broadleaf evergreen shrub; can be sheared into geometric shapes, hedge, or grown as a small tree
Flowering currant (<i>Ribes sanguineum</i>)	8 ft. by 8 ft.	Best in sunny location but will tolerate shade	Deciduous multi-stem shrub; blooms in early spring
Bearberry (<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>) Also known as manzanita or kinnikinnick.	1 ft. tall and 3-15 ft. wide	Salt and wind tolerant; ideal for poor soils and limited water	Fragrant evergreen leaves; pink flowers and bright red berries along woody stems.
Glossy-leaved Spiraea (<i>Spiraea betulifolia</i> var. <i>lucida</i>)	2 ft. tall and 3 ft. wide	Full sun and rich soil; needs light summer water	Low mound, white flowers in late spring, deciduous leaves have fall colors

Perennials

Sword fern (<i>Polystichum munitum</i>)	3 ft tall and wide	Tolerates dry shade	Evergreen mound
Tufted hairgrass (<i>Deschampsia caespitosa</i>)	3 ft. tall and 2 ft. wide	Sun to part shade; some summer water	Evergreen grass; low maintenance.
Western columbine (<i>Aquilegia formosa</i>)	2 ft.	Prefers moist areas in the wild	Nodding red blooms
Deer fern (<i>Blechnum spicant</i>)	2 ft.	light to deep shade; occasional summer water,	evergreen fronds in rich moist soils or well-drained soil, tolerates sandy and clay soils.
Groundcover strawberries (<i>Fragaria</i> spp.)	1- 3 ft. wide	sun to part-shade,	evergreen foliage with fruits for wildlife; can spread

Source: Using Native Plants in Your Garden 10-Minute™ University

<https://cmastergardeners.files.wordpress.com/2022/02/using-native-plants-in-the-garden.pdf>