

## Native Plant Glossary

Below are some common terms and definitions often used to describe native plants.

### Native Plant

- A plant that is a part of the balance of nature that has developed over hundreds or thousands of years in a particular region or ecosystem (US Natural Resources and Conservation Service).
- The term should always be used with a geographic qualifier; for example, native to Oregon.
- Only plants found in this country before European settlement are considered to be native to the United States just as only plants found in Oregon before European settlement are considered to be native to Oregon.

### Non-Native Plant

- A plant that was introduced with human help to a new place or new habitat, where it was not previously found.

### Naturalized Plant

- A non-native plant that does not need human help to maintain itself over time, in an area where it is not native. Naturalized plants are not native.

### Cultivar

- A plant that was bred for certain characteristics, that are maintained during propagation. It does not breed true from seeds and needs human-mediated propagation to continue.
- You can tell a cultivar by its scientific name (genus and species) followed by its cultivar name in quotation marks. For example *Ribes sanguineum* 'Oregon snowflake' is a cultivar derived from the native *Ribes sanguineum*.

### Nativar

- This is a newer term used to identify a cultivar of a native plant. Below are examples of an Oregon native plant, Camas and two other Camas bred for a different color.



Native Camas (*Camassia leichtinii*)



Native Camas (*Camassia leichtinii* 'Sacajawea')



*Camassia leichtinii*  
(*Caerulea Blue Haven*)

**Hybrid**

- The results of a cross between two different species or well-marked varieties within a species. Hybrids grown in a garden situation will not breed true to form from their own seed. A plant produced by crossing the genetic materials from two different species. They are not cultivars, but, you can have cultivars of a hybrid.
  - ◇ Lavandula x intermedia is a cross between Lavandula angustifolia (English lavender) and Lavandula latifolia (Portuguese lavender)
  - ◇ Lavandula x intermedia ‘Grosso’ and Lavandula x intermedia ‘Provence’ are two cultivars of Lavandula x intermedia

**Mutation**

- Plant mutations, also known as sports, are genetic changes that may affect the appearance of the foliage, flowers, fruit or stems.
  - ◇ Plants with mutations and cultivars may “revert”, meaning that part or all of the plant reverts to its original or parent form.
  - ◇ Often plants with variegated leaves or flowers will revert to a solid color



Photo: Rosie Lerner, Purdue Extension



Photo: Landscape Plants Oregon State University

**Variety.**

- In the wild, a plant that is different in some particular characteristic from other members of that species. When grown from seed, a variety will maintain all of its particular characteristics. Also called a botanical variety.

**Resources:**

- Searchable database of Oregon Native Plants: <https://oregonflora.org/garden/index.php>
- List of plants considered native to the Portland area: <https://www.portland.gov/bps/documents/portland-plant-list/download>

*This handout is adapted from “Native Plant Glossary,” presented by 10-Minute-University™ Clackamas County Master Gardener Association.*

**More information:**

