Landscaping with PNW Native Plants

Mason Conservation District
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Topics

1. What is “native?”
2. Why use native plants?
3. Design tips / landscaping strategies
4. Native plants
5. Resources
“Native Plants”:

"Washington native plants are those species that occur or historically occurred within the state boundaries before European contact, based upon the best available scientific and historical documentation."

- Washington Native Plant Society

**Exotic Plants:**

Plants that were introduced from another region or bred as cultivars from regionally local plants (plants found on the West coast, for example).

- **Named Cultivars** – can include natives propagated for specific desirable characteristics
  
  *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* ‘Vancouver Jade’

**Naturalized Plants:** Exotic plants that persist in their new location without cultivation. Some become “invasive.”

**Invasive Plants:** Invasive species are plants, animals, or organisms that spread so quickly that they harm other wildlife or natural processes. - *Washington Invasive Species Council*
Why Landscape with Native Plants?
Practical Reasons …

1. **Save time** (low maintenance once established)
2. **Save money** (few inputs, bareroot = inexpensive)
3. **Protect your property** (erosion, stormwater, weeds)
4. **Help the neighbors** (repeat above)
5. **Protect our local economy** (water quality, recreation)
6. **Conserve natural resources for your children . . .**
   *and their children...* (ground and surface water protection, forest products, hunting and shellfish . . .)
A Few More Reasons . . .

- Cultivate a “Sense of Place”
- Opportunity to learn – and teach!
- Support our wildlife neighbors
Where to Begin?
Design Tips / Inspiration

- Goals
- Considerations
- Narrowing focus
- “Orderly” landscapes
- “Natural” landscapes
# 1. Clear goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecological restoration vs. landscape design</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restoration goals?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>– increase diversity</td>
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<td>– salmon habitat</td>
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<td>– migratory birds</td>
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<td>– improve flood control</td>
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<td>– replace invasive species</td>
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<td>– rare plants</td>
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* Will still have benefits for the environment!
2. Considerations

- site conditions
- different uses / movement
- views

Define the spaces you will use . . . and those you won’t use.

Views? Inside & Outside

Circulation? Define paths before you plant.
3. Narrow your focus

What can you realistically achieve now?

“Zones of focus”
4. Design Styles (*simplified*)

“Natural” or “Orderly” . . . Native plants work in both.
“Orderly” Landscapes

Neat

Appear “cared for”

A familiar approach

Challenges

• Less habitat value (less diversity)
• Lots of maintenance keeps everything looking tidy.
“orderly” characteristics

- Simplicity
- Linear, geometric spaces
- Repetition of limited plant species
- Planting heights limited

Dan Kiley, “Miller House” (IN)
Modernist Landscape Architect
“Natural” Landscapes

Piet Oudolf, Garden Designer
“Natural” Characteristics

- Diversity (10 + species in a planting area)
- Curve lines and shapes, variety
- Multi-seasonal emphasis
- Use “drifts” (groups of the same species); repeat accent plants for color, shape
- Maintenance: replacement, clean up, mulching, tolerance for seed heads . . .
“Natural” = habitat opportunity

(http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/backyard/landscape-design_ landscape.htm)
To encourage birds/bugs/critters

- Plant in layers
- Use a diversity of species – especially native
- Emphasize fruits, nuts, flowers, 4 seasons
- Provide a source of water (with an escape route)
- Consider connections – many animals don’t like to cross open spaces; others thrive along edges
Create “order” by repeating colors and/or plant species
Challenges:

• Too “messy” or disorderly?

• Visually stimulating - or overwhelming?

• Periodic investment in new plants

• Attracts bees/bugs/birds; pollen
Combine the “orderly” & “natural”

Roberto Burle Marx,
Brazilian Landscape Architect (1909-1994)
Combine Styles . . .

Clean edges

Open yet dense

Layered plantings

Mixed heights

Repetition of accent plants or trees
COLOR tips

- Use “drifts” with similar color range
- Add one contrasting color for contrast
- Provide areas for visual “rest” – just green.
- Repeat color blocks throughout the garden to unify
• sculptural elements  
• repetition  
• linear use of trees  
• diverse understory
• Hardscape materials like concrete, metal, and wood contrast with diverse plantings. Simple, clean, elegant lines and visual interest.
Rain Garden in Olympia
– mixed natives and ornamentals (L. Andrews)
Wildlife garden in King County:

wet area used as a seasonal water feature that . . . recharges groundwater, filters nutrients, provides precious amphibian habitat . . .
PUD #3 / Johns Prairie: 90% native species & accents
Planting your native garden

1. Soils + Site Prep

2. Types of native planting stock & when to plant

3. Right Plant, Right Place: overview of native species
Soils & Site Preparation

- Generally, you don’t need to amend soils for native plants – they will adapt to the location.

- Add compost and mulch to the soil surface (help retain soil moisture, discourage weeds, provide slow-release nutrients)

- Water for the first 2-3 summers
Types of native plant stock

**Container Stock**

- easy to transplant
- can leave in pot for a long period of time
- Available all year
- Ideal planting time: Fall

Expensive, Heavy to move
Bare Root Plants

- Inexpensive
- Easy to handle
- Light weight

- Only available ~ Feb.
- Need to plant quickly
- Store in cool, moist conditions (heel in)
- Roots must stay moist and tops dormant until planting in late fall or early spring

Planting Technique:
- Soak roots in water overnight
- Dig hole
- Mound soil in bottom
- Spread roots over mound, separating them
- Backfill with original soil
PLAN FOR MATURE PLANT SIZE

Choose and locate plants based on their eventual “mature size” – (unless you love pruning).

Look for examples in the landscape around you. Use your camera/cell phone to take pictures

Select plants with different mature heights to create more interest.
Right Plant, Right Place
Favorite Pacific Northwest Natives for Landscaping
Acer circinatum (Vine Maple)

Deciduous tree / shrub
Slow growing to 25 ft
Part Shade, moist to dry
* Great for pots
Fall color
Specimen plant
Wildlife – bugs + birds
Myrica californica (Pacific Wax Myrtle)

Evergreen, Large shrub
Fast growing to ~ 15 ft
Sun, well drained soils
* Great for hedges, privacy
Blechnum spicant (Deer Fern)

1 – 3 ft tall
Common under-story plant in moist conifer forests.
* Great for texture, shade, low growing groundcover, drifts
Polystichum munitum
(Western Sword Fern)

To 4 ft tall

Common under-story plant in moist conifer forests.

* Great for texture, shade to part-sun, mid-sized shrub, drifts
Gaultheria shallon  
Salal

To 4 ft tall

Common under-story plant in moist conifer forests.

Shade / Part-shade

Moist to dry

* Great for low hedges, fruit, shade, mid-sized shrub, drifts
Berberis sp. (Oregon Grape)

**Tall (3-6’):** Dry, sun, slopes, shorelines

**Low (1-3’):** shade, understory, moist-dry

Slow growing, tough, spreads

- Beautiful flowers, fruit, leaves
- Not fun to walk through – sharp leaves
Berberis aquifolium (Tall Oregon Grape)
Berberis nervosa (Low Oregon Grape)
Vaccinium ovatum
(Evergreen huckleberry)

To 4 ft tall
Common under-story plant
Shade / Part-shade
Moist to dry

* Great for low hedges, fruit, shade, mid-sized shrub, evergreen foliage
Arctostaphylos uva-ursi (Kinnikinnick)
**Arctostaphylos uva-ursi**
(Kinnikinnick)

To $\frac{1}{2}$ ft tall

Groundcover for sun, dry soils

Slow to establish
*Fragaria chiloensis* (Coastal Strawberry)
Holodiscus discolor (Oceanspray)

Deciduous Shrub - Up to 15 ft.
Salt spray tolerant

Blooms: April – August
Flowers: Creamy white, sometimes blushing salmon/pink
Moisture req.: dry - moist
Exposure req.: sun – shade
**Rosa Gymnocarpa** (Baldhip Rose)

- Height: Up to 5 ft
- Leaves: 1-7 cm long, 5-9 toothed leaflets
- Flowers: Pale pink; 1-2 cm across
- Fruits: Purplish red; 1-2 cm

**Rosa nutkana** (Nootka Rose)

- Height: Up to 10 ft.
- Leaves: 1-7 cm long, 5-7 leaflets
- Flowers: Pink; 4-8 cm across
- Fruit: Orange to scarlet; 6-10 mm
Rubus spectabilis (Salmonberry)

3-10 ft tall
Moist places
Philadelphus lewisii (Mock Orange)

To 10 ft tall

Dry, full sun, tough
Ribes sanguineum
(Red flowering currant)
Ribes sanguineum
(Red flowering currant)
Garrya elliptica (Silk Tassle)
Physocarpos capitatus (Pacific Ninebark)
Cornus sericea (Red-osier dogwood)
Amelanchier alnifolia (Western Serviceberry / Saskatoon Berry)
Oemeleria cerasiformis  (Osoberry)
Pacific Rhododendron
(*Rhododendron macrophyllum*)
Rubus parviflorus (Thimbleberry)
Rubus parviflorus (Thimbleberry)
Deschampsia cespitosa (Tufted hairgrass)
Symphoricarpos albus (Snowberry)
Treasure your trees!

- Choose the right tree for your site and your goals.
- Hire a professional arborist to prune for views rather than removing the tree.
2. **Trees are worth their weight in gold:**

Only remove trees when truly necessary. Trees help control stormwater, mitigate erosion, protect water quality, aid aquifer recharge, provide habitat . . .
Acer macrophyllum (Big Leaf maple)
Quercus garryana (Garry Oak)
Arbutus menziesii (Pacific madrone)
To 100 ft tall

Dry, sun, slopes and shorelines

Extremely difficult to establish; hates disturbance

Prone to several diseases

* Beautiful bark, flowers, fruit, open growth habit for shoreline stabilization and views
Douglas fir
Western red cedar
Grand fir
SAMPLE PLANTING PLAN: LAKE SHORELINE
Focus on Pacific Northwest Native Plants

**SYMBOL**
- Waters' Edge (saturated soils)
  - Sawbreak Sedge (Carex stipata)
  - Tufted Hairgrass (Deschampsia cespitosa)
  - Common Rush (Juncus effusus)
  - Slender Rush (Juncus tenus)
  - Tapered Rush (Juncus acuminatus)

- Lower Bank (moist soils)
  - Oregon Ash (Fraxinus latifolia)
    - Black Cottonwood (Populus balsamifera ssp. trichocarpa)
    - Western Redcedar (Thuja plicata)
  - Pacific Crabapple (Malus fusca)
  - Red Elderberry (Sambucus racemosa)
    - Pacific Ninebark (Physocarpus capitatus)
    - Black Hawthorne (Crataegus douglasii)
  - Red-osier Dogwood (Cornus sericea)
    - High Bush Cranberry (Viburnum edule)
    - Salmonberry (Rubus spectabilis)
    - Daggerleaf Rush (Juncus effusus)
  - Hookers Willow (Salix hookeriensis)
    - Pacific Willow (Salix lanata)
    - Sitka Willow (Salix sitchensis)

**SYMBOL**
- Upper Bank (moist/dry soils)
  - Western Hemlock (Tsuga heterophylla)
    - Sitka Spruce (Picea sitchensis)
    - Shore Pine (Pinus contorta var. contorta)
  - Big Leaf Maple (Acer macrophyllum)
    - Vine Maple (Acer circinatum)
    - Western Hazelnut (Corylus cornus)
    - Serviceberry (Amelanchier alnifolia)
  - Salal (Gaultheria shallon)
    - Sword fern (Polystichum munitum)
    - Snowberry (Symphoricarpos albus)
  - Swamp Rose (Rosa palustris)
    - Nootka Rose (Rosa nutkana)
    - Thimbleberry (Rubus parviflorus)
  - Deer Fern (Blechnum spicant)
    - False Solomon's Seal (Smilacina racemosa)

*% – tolerant to deep shade  ...Alternative plant choices are listed in gray.
Mason Conservation District Native Plant Series

SAMPLE PLANTING PLAN: MARINE SHORELINE
Focus on Pacific Northwest Native Plants

**View to water**
View created by carefully pruning trees and selecting low-growing shrubs. (Avoid completely removing plants - this actually causes erosion problems.)

**Top of slope**
This area planted with low-maintenance groundcovers or a small, drought-tolerant lawn.

**Symbol Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Tree / Large Shrubs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Pacific Madrone (Arbutus menziesii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DF</td>
<td>Douglas-fir (Pseudotsuga menziesii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Garry oak (Quercus garryana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/SF</td>
<td>Pacific Crabapple (Malus floribunda)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GO</td>
<td>Serviceberry (Amelanchier alnifolia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OS</td>
<td>View to water</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Symbol Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Shrub</th>
<th>Groundcover</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Ocean Spray (Holodiscus discolor)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Wax Myrtle (Myrica californica)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Thimbleberry (Rubus parviflorus)</td>
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<tr>
<td>S/SF</td>
<td>Salal (Gaultheria shallon)</td>
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<tr>
<td>S/SF</td>
<td>Sword fern (Polystichum munitum)</td>
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<tr>
<td>S/SF</td>
<td>Snowberry (Symphoricarpos albus)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OG</td>
<td>Tall Oregon Grape (Mahonia/Berberis aquifolium)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OG</td>
<td>Nootka Rose (Rosa nervosa)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OG</td>
<td>Hooker's Willow (Salix hookeri)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TH</td>
<td>Tufted Hairgrass (Deschampsia caespitosa)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TH</td>
<td>Coastal Lupine (Lupinus littoralis)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TH</td>
<td>Coastal Strawberry (Fragaria chiloensis)</td>
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<tr>
<td>S/SF</td>
<td>Seashore saligea (Distichlis spicata)</td>
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<tr>
<td>S/SF</td>
<td>Silverwood (Phoradendron squamosum)</td>
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<tr>
<td>S/SF</td>
<td>Henderson's Checkered-mallow (Sidalcea hendersonii)</td>
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It’s okay to mix it up!
Ornamentals and natives both have benefits – don’t hesitate to use both in your landscape. Let gardening be a joy.
Happy Gardening

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Mason Conservation District