

BEST PRACTICES



Lovely Native Plants for Your Winter Landscape

Whether you are an avid gardener or not, the quiet months of winter are a great time to pause and take notice of your landscape. It's also the time of year when we see why plants that put on a show in winter are so delightful. Adding plants that provide winter interest in your yard is often overlooked. Luckily, here in the Pacific Northwest, we are fortunate to have a variety of native plants that provide beauty even during the winter months. Here are a few that will lift your spirits through winter's darkest days.

***Symphoricarpos albus*:** Common Snowberry is an easy-going, carefree native shrub with small green leaves. When autumn leaves drop you are left with slender branches covered with stark white berries. Berries provide food for birds in the leaner times of late winter. Tiny blossoms of pinkish-white tubes are abundant during their long bloom period from late spring to late summer. These plants will catch your eye and attract hummingbirds too!

***Mahonia*:** Oregon grape plants are colorful western shrubs with year-round appeal. Oregon grape plants are very beneficial and attractive to wildlife. Flowers provide for pollinators like bees, moths and butterflies. Hummingbirds love the flowers and it is an important source of food for them during winter months. The fruits are enjoyed by towhees, robins and waxwings, as well as mammals. All-season cover provides habitat for arthropods, birds, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals. Bright yellow flowers appear in late winter followed by blue or blue-black berry-like fruit. There are three species to consider;

- *Mahonia aquifolium* is the variety generally known as "Oregon Grape". It can get 6 feet tall and 5 feet wide
- *Mahonia compacta* is smaller, about 3 feet high,
- *Mahonia repens* (Creeping Mahonia), is a good ground-cover type that stays below 1 foot in height and spreads to about 3 feet in width.

***Cornus sericea*:** Red-Twig Dogwood has red upright stems that make it a stunning beauty in winter! Its berry-like fruits will draw birds to your garden in numbers. This Northwest native can handle areas in your yard with wet conditions. It will grow in most soils and they are drought hardy once established. In the fall, leaves turn various shades of red. Flowers and fruit provide food for insects and birds. A winter landscape isn't complete without the presence of twig-dogwoods. (Yellow-twig and variegated-leaf varieties also exist.)

***Polystichum munitum*:** Western Sword Fern is an iconic, visually striking and tolerant evergreen fern. It's so common that it is often overlooked as a garden plant. Its beautiful dark green fronds make an excellent understory plant for layering your landscape. It is also tough once established and is often found growing in cracks between rocks, beneath established trees or on steep, north-facing banks.



***Vaccinium ovatum*:** Evergreen Huckleberry is a small, elegant evergreen shrub that bears fruit. Adaptable and attractive, evergreen huckleberry grows densely in full sun and in shady sites in the wild. It produces dainty white, urn-shaped flowers that feed hummingbirds and insects. It's delicious fruit is enjoyed by wildlife and humans alike.

***Sedum spathulifolium*:** Broadleaf Stonecrop is a colorful Northwest succulent. Pretty yellow flowers appear on short stems in mid-spring, providing nectar for insects. It's evergreen foliage turns pink or red in summer and is green in winter. This plant is extremely drought tolerant once established, growing best in well-drained or sandy soils.

***Gaultheria shallon*:** Salal is so common in our region that it tends to be overlooked by home gardeners. It is a lovely evergreen shrub, 3–6 feet tall that can be used as a thick ground cover. In spring to early summer, white to pink flowers form clusters of delicate drooping bells. The blue-black berries that follow are a treat for both people and wildlife.

For tips on how to keep your plants healthy in our changing climate see the article on pgs. 4 – 5.



Huckleberry



Salal

Source: Stream Team News, Winter 2021