



Photo by Kraig Esswein

NATIVE PLANT LANDSCAPING

Savvy gardeners and landscapers have always known that native plants provide a broad range of benefits for humans and their fellow creatures, especially in urban settings. Native plants are the logical choice for landscapes focused on resource conservation and ecological health, but choosing plants requires a general understanding of the differences between native species and common ornamental plants, particularly in water use and soil requirements.

Native plants have survived generations of natural selection to become specifically suited to the heat, drought and high winds we experience in Central Oregon, on top of our short growing season and low soil fertility. Because they reproduce by seed, their mixed genetics make them more resilient to pests, diseases and environmental changes, though it does mean individual species don't always look or perform the same way in a landscape. Native plants have co-evolved with our native fauna, making them important for habitat restoration and species conservation.

Common ornamental plants, on the other hand, have higher water and fertilizer needs and lower native wildlife value. Due to the nature of commercial plant breeding and consumer demand for consistent blooming and growth traits, they are almost genetically identical, leaving them more vulnerable to pests, diseases and environmental changes. They're also bred for visual characteristics like unique colors or double petals that make them virtually useless to our native pollinators. That's not to say they can't be included in a landscape at all, but their placement should be selective and scarce.

BENEFITS OF NATIVE LANDSCAPING



CONSERVES RESOURCES by reducing water, fertilizer and pesticide use, saving you time and money and reducing your exposure to harmful chemicals.



PROVIDES ESSENTIAL HABITAT FOR NATIVE FAUNA & INCREASES BIODIVERSITY by attracting wildlife, native pollinators and beneficial insects to your garden. Ecologically-balanced landscapes with deeper pools of genetic diversity are better able to withstand pest and disease problems and environmental changes.



IMPROVES SOIL HEALTH and water retention capabilities by encouraging natural symbiotic and fungal relationships.



REQUIRES LESS MAINTENANCE (no more mowing, fertilizing or extra watering).



CREATES A SENSE OF PLACE by showcasing the environmental character of a particular area.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

- 1 Remove and keep invasive trees, shrubs and weeds at bay. These provide limited habitat value and eventually outcompete natives for water, nutrients and space.
- 2 Eliminate or reduce the size of your lawn.
- 3 Start replacing water-hungry ornamentals with native plants. No yard? No problem. Grow native plants in containers and cluster together to attract more birds and insects.
- 4 Limit your fall clean-up. Leave plant stems, seed heads and leaves as native birds and bugs make use of these throughout the year.
- 5 Add natural insect nesting areas like a log, snag, rock pile or a bare patch of dirt.
- 6 Eliminate or limit pesticide use.

Conduct a thorough evaluation of the elements in your yard - front, back and sides. Are there underused areas that could be converted? Though a common default in most landscapes, turf grass should only be used where it makes sense, so see where you can cut it out and replace with native plantings (i.e. narrow corridors alongside buildings and the strip between sidewalks and streets). Start replacing water-hungry ornamentals with appropriate natives and install drip irrigation instead of pop-up sprinklers.

Native landscaping can also be used to solve problems like erosion or flooding. Re-grading an area, creating bio-swales and planting with deep-rooted or moisture-tolerant native plants can restore the functionality of your landscape while also providing habitat and wild beauty. We actually have a wide and diverse palette of native species in Central Oregon, so it's easier than you think to find the right plant for the right place.

The best part is there are no set design standards for native plant landscaping. It can be planned as distinct architectural elements, it can be a messy habitat providing food and shelter for insects and birds or it can be somewhere in between that satisfies your personal aesthetic while enhancing the ecology of your property. The important thing to remember is that native landscapes are dynamic and forgiving and will provide years of enjoyment as they mature.

SOME OF OUR FAVORITES



Wax currant



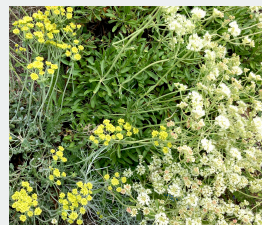
Desert sweet



Western columbine



Flax & Globe mallow



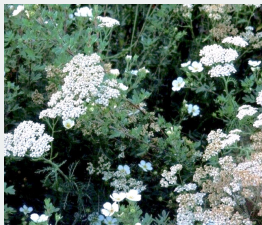
Buckwheat



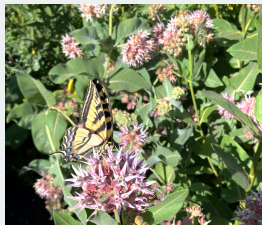
Firecracker penstemon



Oregon sunshine



Yarrow



Showy milkweed



Goldenrod

For a complete plant list with growth requirements, visit worthyenvironmental.org/resources

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