



King County

Department of Natural Resources and Parks

**Water and Land Resources Division**

King Street Center, KSC-NR-0600

201 South Jackson Street, Suite 600

Seattle, WA 98104

206-296-6519 TTY Relay: 711

[dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr](http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr)

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# Going Native

*A guide to creating  
your own native plant landscape*

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## Why go native?

It's up to all of us to keep our waterways clean and healthy. Native plants bring benefits to Northwest land and water resources, wildlife and people—and you can have them in your own yard!

Well-established native plants control erosion by holding the soil with their roots. They reduce flooding by slowing runoff. Trees, shrubs and groundcovers clean water by filtering out sediment and pollutants before they reach lakes and streams. Northwest fish and wildlife depend on native plants for food, shelter, and cover. Once established, native plants in the right place require little maintenance.

A naturally-cared for native landscape is healthy for kids, pets and our environment. Your yard makes a difference! This brochure, plus a little time, money and sweat, is all you need to build a great looking native plant landscape. Footnotes refer to Web sites and other resources found on the last page.

## 1. Make a plan

**Scan the land.** Assess your site conditions to determine what plants will thrive in your spot. Remember that planning is easier (and cheaper) than replanting. Consider light, moisture and soil conditions. Is the site sunny, shady or some of both? How often is the area wet? Test your soils by sticking a shovel in the ground. Is it rocky? Sandy? Mostly clay? Need dynamite?

Think about the other features of your site, too. Note power lines, existing trees, view corridors, and height restrictions. Leave space for decks, additions or water features you may want to add in years to come.

If you want to plant beside a stream or wetland, check with your local jurisdiction about possible permit requirements. If you are using only native plants and hand tools, permits may not be required.

**Where to plant?** Put your native plant landscape in the less-traveled areas of your property to attract more wildlife. Keep your vegetable garden, perennial beds, and lawn close to the house (and hose) so they get the attention they need with fewer hassles.

## 2. Prepare the site

**Take some lawn out.** Consider replacing your lawn with natives where grass grows poorly or is losing the battle with moss. You'll save time and aggravation and your yard will look great. Unwanted lawn can be cut into easily lifted squares with a flat bladed spade or removed with a rented sod remover. Or compost your lawn in place by covering grass with heavy cardboard and a few inches of wood chips or bark.<sup>1</sup>



**Add other features.** Now is also the time to create mounds, install wildlife snags, rock piles or ponds<sup>2</sup> and remove any pesky invasive

weeds. Weed removal is a challenge! Be sure to look at other resources to battle your problem weeds<sup>3</sup>.

## 3. Pick the right plants for your spot

This brochure includes a plant list of popular and common natives, many of which can adapt to a range of sites. Narrow your choices to plants that match the sunlight, moisture and space conditions of your site. Then pick your favorites.



Each native plant performs a role in its habitat, so use each plant to its best advantage. To control erosion on the edge of a stream, plant red osier dogwood, willows, Oregon ash and vine maple. To attract hummingbirds, plant red flowering currant and orange honeysuckle.<sup>4</sup> And kids as well as animals enjoy huckleberries and native blackberries. To attract more wildlife, “layer” plants that grow to different heights; check out the examples of layering on page 6.<sup>2</sup>

**Is bigger better?** Most important, choose plants that fit your spot when full-grown. Pruning large plants to fit a small area is loads of work and could harm your plant's health. Larger plants may suffer more transplant shock and higher mortality than small plants, but can survive deer browsing better and are less likely to be trampled or weed-whacked.

**Start shopping.** While native plants are increasingly available in nurseries, some may be a little harder to find.<sup>5</sup> Ask the King Conservation District (206-764-3410 or [www.kingcd.org](http://www.kingcd.org)) and the Washington Native Plant Society (206-527-3210 or [www.wnps.org](http://www.wnps.org)) about their annual native plant sales. When buying, use the Latin name to get the plant you want. For example, asking for mock orange could land you the European *Philadelphus coronarius* rather than our Northwest native mock orange, *Philadelphus lewisii*. Bring the attached plant list to help.

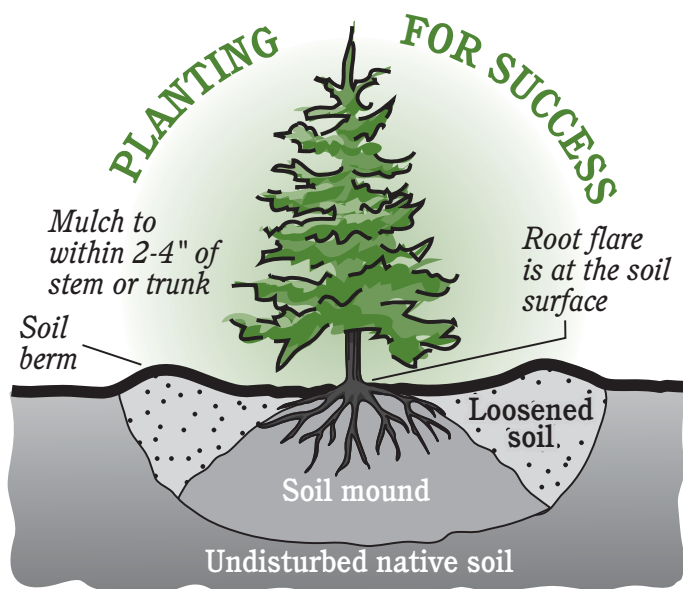
#### 4. Proper planting is paramount!

Help your plants put their best root forward.<sup>6</sup> Take the time to plant carefully. Fall or winter is the best time of year to plant. In most years, a newly installed plant's survival decreases after March as the weather gets drier and warmer. Set out your plants, still in their pots, where you want them and rearrange for the look you like. Cluster three or more shrubs of the same species for a natural look. General guidelines for plant spacing are 10-15 feet apart for trees, 5-10 feet for shrubs and 1-3 feet apart for groundcovers.



- 1 Take the plant out of its pot or burlap to view its root size. Keep the roots wet.
- 2 Dig a saucer-shaped hole 2-3 times the width of the root mass, and about as deep. Fill hole with water and let drain.

- 3 Build a mound of soil at the bottom of the hole.
- 4 Loosen bound roots and gently shake off excess potting soil (not into the planting hole).
- 5 Gently spread the roots evenly over the soil mound. The roots should not circle in the hole.
- 6 Place the plant so the root flare (where the roots join the stem) is at the soil surface.
- 7 Replace soil into the hole so it fills the space between the roots.
- 8 Water generously and add more soil to fill the hole up to the root flare. Create a soil berm around the planting hole to retain moisture.
- 9 Mulch!



**Mulch, mulch, mulch!** Tree grindings, leaves, wood chips, shredded bark, grass clippings, compost, and manure are all common mulches.<sup>7</sup> Spread mulch at least a couple of inches deep around your new plants (but keep the mulch a couple of inches from the plant's stem). Use mulch over weed barriers (cardboard or newspaper) if you're eager to reduce weeding. Weed barriers are temporary, though; annual additions of mulch and shading by plants helps control weeds and creates a healthy landscape in the long run.

**Do fence me in.** A fence can keep livestock, rodents, pets or children away from new plants. There are a variety of plant protectors available to keep your tender new shrubs from becoming a wildlife snack. Once established, most plants survive moderate munching.

## 5. A little maintenance goes a long way

Mulch helps reduce weeding and watering, but you will still need to help your new plantings get established.<sup>8</sup> Water when dry during the first two growing seasons. Deep, infrequent watering is best. Let the soil nearly dry out between soakings. Many native plants will need little or no additional water after one or two growing seasons, when they develop healthy root systems. Handpull invasive plants to give your new natives a chance to grow.<sup>3</sup> Once a well-planned native landscape matures, it will almost care for itself.

**Learn more!** Visit <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/topics/yard-and-garden> for links to native plant nurseries, resources and more. Or call 206-296-6519 and ask for information about native plant landscaping. If you are planning to restore habitat along streams or rivers, ask for the Small Habitat Restoration Program.

### • Sample planting plans

*The following four illustrations are intended to give you a jumping off point to get started naturescaping. Different conditions make it very difficult to present a planting plan suitable for every site. Soil alkalinity, elevation, slope and soil texture can all affect the survival of plants in your yard. Learn more, experiment and celebrate the successes.*

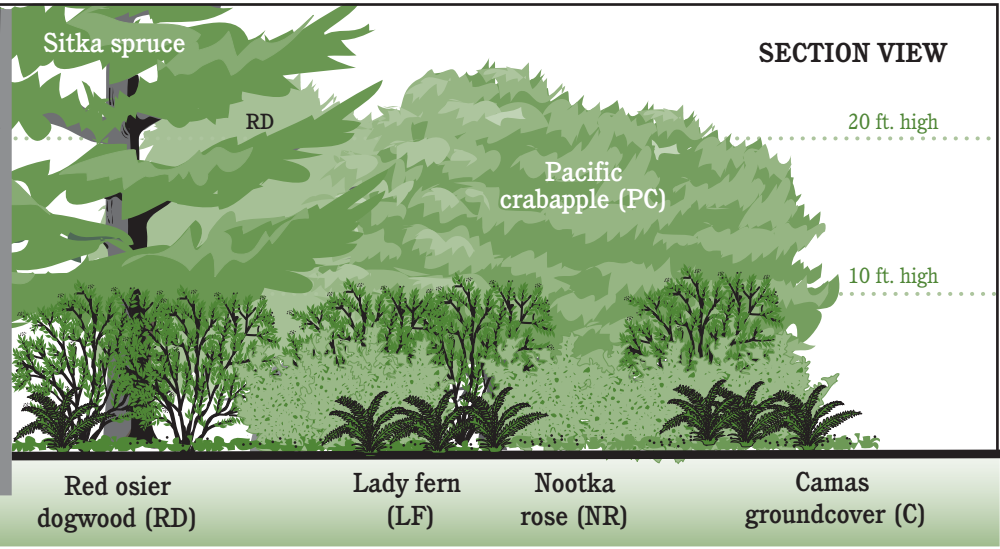
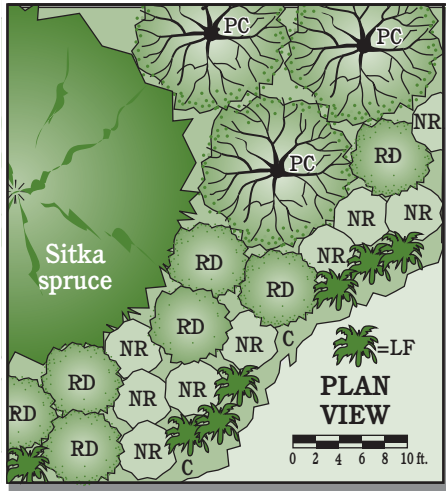
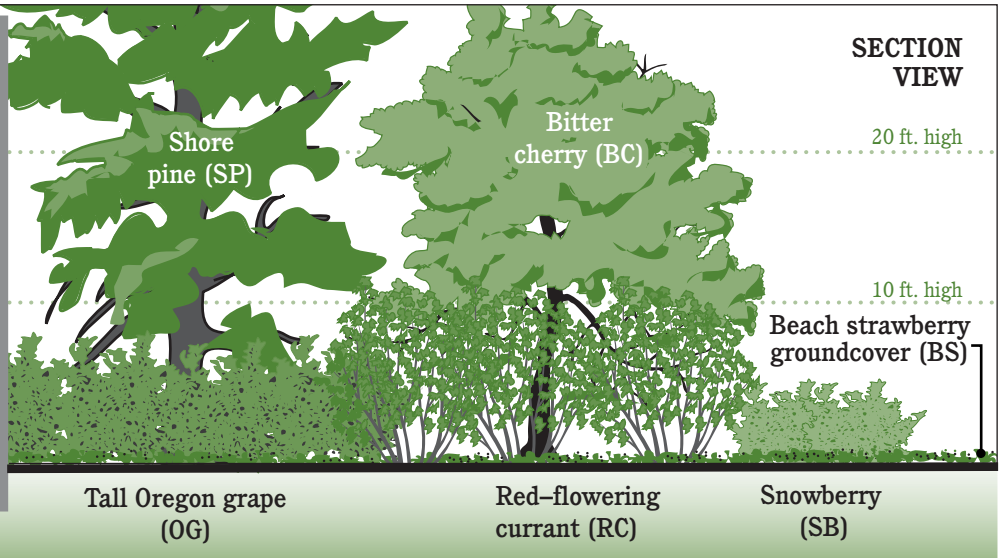
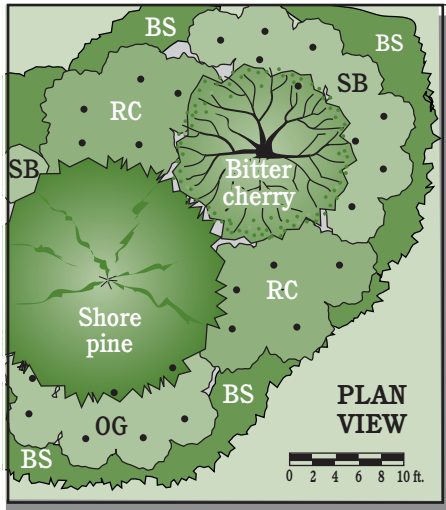
### • Suggested native plants list

*This list contains some of the more common and readily available native plants. We left out some notable plants, but there are plenty here to get you started. Check out our resource list at the end to learn more.*



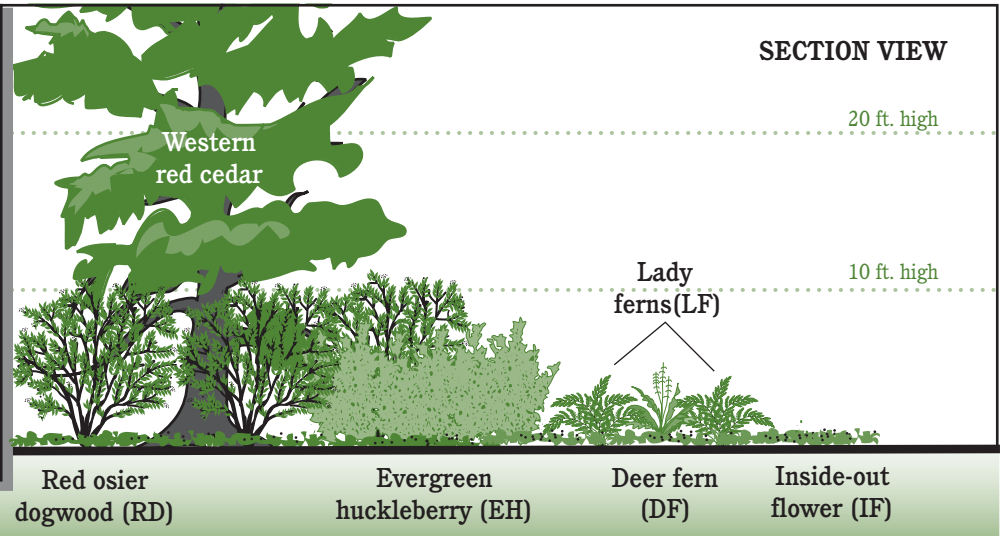
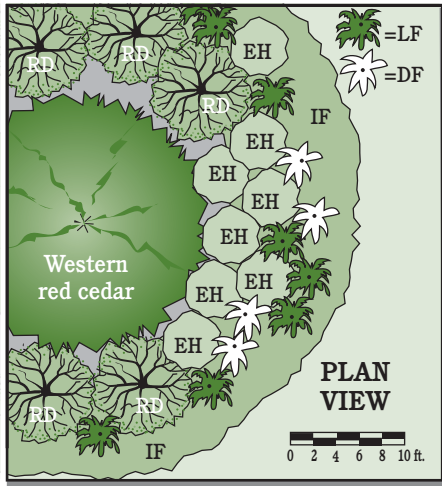
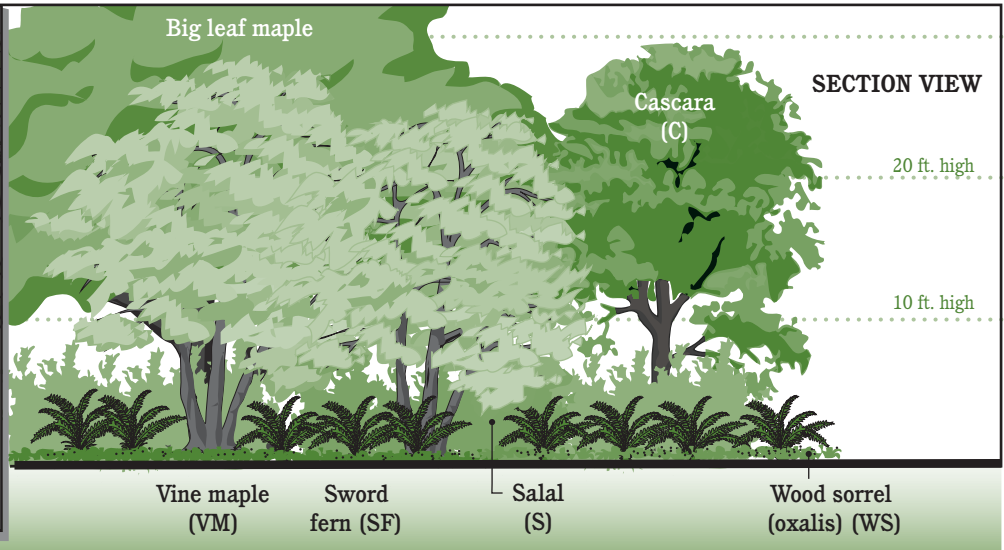
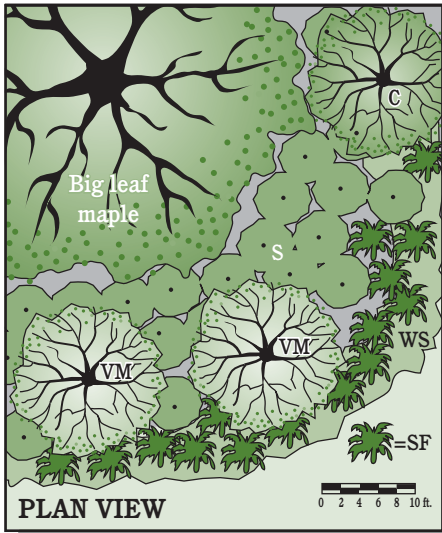
## Appendices

# Sample Planting for Sunny, Dry Conditions



# Sample Planting for Sunny, Moist Conditions

## Sample Planting for Shady, Dry Conditions



## Sample Planting for Shady, Moist Conditions

## Native Plant List—Trees

Common name	Botanical name		Ideal growing conditions	Height	Notes
<b>Big leaf maple</b>	<i>(Acer macrophyllum)</i>	Deciduous	dry-moist, sun-part shade	100 ft	
<b>Bitter cherry</b>	<i>(Prunus emarginata)</i>	Deciduous	dry-moist, sun-part shade	30 ft	
<b>Black cottonwood</b>	<i>(Populus balsamifera)</i>	Deciduous	moist-wet, sun-part shade	160 ft	
<b>Black hawthorn</b>	<i>(Crataegus suksdorfii)</i>	Deciduous	moist-wet, sun-part shade	30 ft	
<b>Cascara</b>	<i>(Rhamnus purshiana)</i>	Deciduous	*dry-wet, sun-shade	30 ft	
<b>Douglas-fir</b>	<i>(Pseudotsuga menziesii)</i>	Evergreen	dry-moist, sun-part shade	250 ft	
<b>Grand fir</b>	<i>(Abies grandis)</i>	Evergreen	dry-moist, sun-shade	250 ft	
<b>Oregon ash</b>	<i>(Fraxinus latifolia)</i>	Deciduous	moist-wet, sun-part shade	70 ft	
<b>Pacific crabapple</b>	<i>(Malus fusca)</i>	Deciduous	moist-wet, sun-part shade	40 ft	
<b>Pacific willow</b>	<i>(Salix lasiandra)</i>	Deciduous	moist-wet, sun-part shade	40 ft	
<b>Red alder</b>	<i>(Alnus rubra)</i>	Deciduous	dry-wet, sun-part shade	120 ft	
<b>Scouler's willow</b>	<i>(Salix scouleriana)</i>	Deciduous	dry-moist, sun-part shade	30 ft	
<b>Shore pine</b>	<i>(Pinus contorta var. contorta)</i>	Evergreen	dry-wet, sun-part shade	50 ft	
<b>Sitka spruce</b>	<i>(Picea sitchensis)</i>	Evergreen	moist-wet, sun-part shade	200 ft	
<b>Sitka willow</b>	<i>(Salix sitchensis)</i>	Deciduous	moist-wet, sun-part shade	30 ft	
<b>Vine maple</b>	<i>(Acer circinatum)</i>	Deciduous	*dry-moist, sun-shade	25 ft	
<b>Western hemlock</b>	<i>(Tsuga heterophylla)</i>	Evergreen	moist-wet, part shade-shade	225 ft	
<b>Western red cedar</b>	<i>(Thuja plicata)</i>	Evergreen	moist-wet, part shade-shade	200 ft	
<b>Western white pine</b>	<i>(Pinus monticola)</i>	Evergreen	dry-moist, sun-part shade	130 ft	

### Definitions:

**Dry:** quick drying well draining soils

**Moist:** damp much of year (not standing water)

**Wet:** rarely or never dries out

**Sun:** more than 6 hours sun

**Part shade:** 2-6 hours sun

**Shade:** fewer than 2 hours sun

**Deciduous:** drops leaves seasonally

\* If planted in full sun, prefers moist conditions. Dry shade is fine.



## Native Plant List—Shrubs and Ferns

Common name	Botanical name		Ideal growing conditions	Height	Notes
Beaked hazelnut	( <i>Corylus cornuta</i> )	Deciduous	dry–moist, sun–shade	20 ft	
Deer fern	( <i>Blechnum spicant</i> )	Evergreen	moist–wet, part shade–shade	2 ft	
Evergreen huckleberry	( <i>Vaccinium ovatum</i> )	Evergreen	*dry–moist, part shade–shade	10 ft	
Indian plum	( <i>Oemleria cerasiformis</i> )	Deciduous	*dry–moist, part shade–shade	15 ft	
Lady fern	( <i>Athyrium filix–femina</i> )	Deciduous	moist–wet, sun–shade	4 ft	
Mock orange	( <i>Philadelphus lewisii</i> )	Deciduous	dry–moist, sun–part shade	9 ft	
Oceanspray	( <i>Holodiscus discolor</i> )	Deciduous	dry–moist, sun–part shade	15 ft	
Oregon grape (tall)	( <i>Mahonia aquifolium</i> )	Evergreen	*dry–moist, sun–shade	5 ft	spreads easily
Pacific ninebark	( <i>Physocarpus capitatus</i> )	Deciduous	moist–wet, sun–shade	13 ft	
Pacific wax myrtle	( <i>Myrica californica</i> )	Evergreen	*dry–moist, sun–shade	15 ft	
Red elderberry	( <i>Sambucus racemosa</i> )	Deciduous	*dry–moist, sun–shade	15 ft	
Red–flowering currant	( <i>Ribes sanguineum</i> )	Deciduous	dry–moist, sun–part shade	6 ft	
Red huckleberry	( <i>Vaccinium parvifolium</i> )	Deciduous	dry–moist, part shade–shade	10 ft	
Red osier dogwood	( <i>Cornus sericea</i> )	Deciduous	moist–wet, sun–shade	15 ft	
Rosa species	( <i>R. nutkana</i> , <i>R. pisocarpa</i> )	Deciduous	dry–wet, sun–part shade	6 ft	spreads easily
Salal	( <i>Gaultheria shallon</i> )	Evergreen	*dry–moist, part shade–shade	5 ft	spreads easily
Salmonberry	( <i>Rubus spectabilis</i> )	Deciduous	moist–wet, sun–shade	10 ft	spreads easily
Serviceberry	( <i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i> )	Deciduous	dry–moist, sun–shade	20 ft	
Snowberry	( <i>Symphoricarpos albus</i> )	Deciduous	dry–wet, sun or part shade	5 ft	spreads easily
Sword fern	( <i>Polystichum munitum</i> )	Evergreen	dry–moist, part shade–shade	3 ft	
Thimbleberry	( <i>Rubus parviflorus</i> )	Deciduous	*dry–moist, sun–shade	8 ft	spreads easily

### Definitions:

**Dry:** quick drying well draining soils

**Moist:** damp much of year (not standing water)

**Wet:** rarely or never dries out

**Sun:** more than 6 hours sun

**Part shade:** 2-6 hours sun

**Shade:** fewer than 2 hours sun

**Deciduous:** drops leaves seasonally

\* If planted in full sun, prefers moist conditions. Dry shade is fine.

## Native Plant List—Groundcovers and Perennials

Common name	Botanical name	Ideal growing conditions		Height	Notes
Beach strawberry	<i>Fragaria chiloensis</i>	Evergreen	dry–moist, sun–part shade	6 in	spreads easily
Bleeding heart	<i>Dicentra formosa</i>	Deciduous	dry–moist, part shade–shade	1.5 ft	spreads easily
Camas	<i>Camassia quamash</i>	Deciduous	*dry–moist, sun–part shade	1 ft	
Inside–out–flower	<i>Vancouveria hexandra</i>	Deciduous	dry–moist, part shade–shade	6 in	spreads easily
Kinnikinnick	<i>Arctostaphylos uva–ursi</i>	Evergreen	dry, sun	6 in	spreads easily
Western trillium	<i>Trillium ovatum</i>	Deciduous	moist, shade	1 ft	
Wood sorrel	<i>Oxalis oregana</i>	Deciduous	dry–moist, part shade–shade	6 in	spreads easily

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## Footnote Resources for More Information

All these and more are at:

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/pi/npresrcs.htm>

### 1. Shrink your Lawn!

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/pi/shrunklawn.htm>

### 2. Landscaping for Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest.

Russell Link. UW Press, Seattle. 1999.

### 3. King County Noxious Weeds:

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/lands/weeds/index.htm>

### 4. Native Plant Information:

- **Grow Your Own Native Landscape.** Item MISC0273 WSU Cooperative Extension. Revised 1999. Order at 1-800-723-1763.
- **Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest.** 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Arthur R. Kruckeberg. UW Press, Seattle 1996.
- **Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast.** Jim Pojar and Andy Mackinnon. Lone Pine Publishing, Vancouver, BC. 1994.

### • WSU Native Plant Guide

<http://gardening.wsu.edu/text/nwnative.htm>

### 5. Native Plant Sources:

#### • Where to purchase native plants

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/pi/npnursry.htm>

- **Restoration Growers Association**—Let the King Conservation District find local native plants for you! Contact KCD at 206-296-3410 ext. 129.

### 6. Plant it Right Brochure:

<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/misc0337/misc0337.pdf>

### 7. Soils, Compost & Mulch Information:

#### • Soils, compost and mulch use

<http://www.metrokc.gov/soils/>

#### • Mulch and horticulture myths

<http://www.cfr.washington.edu/research.mulch/>

### 8. Natural Yard Care Booklet (includes watering):

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/swd/ResRecy/composting/naturalyardbooklet.shtml>