

COMMON SENSE

Gardening



*A plant list for the
earth-friendly gardener.*

PREPARED BY

THURSTON COUNTY LOCAL HAZARDOUS WASTE PROGRAM

A JOINT EFFORT OF THURSTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT, THURSTON COUNTY WATER AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

Common Sense Plant List

Careful plant selection is the key to creating a healthy and easy to maintain landscape. This guide will help you choose plants adapted to the Northwest. Plants on this list are either low-water use, resistant to insects and diseases or native to western Washington. Many Northwest gardens include non-native and native plants, which provide the gardens with beautiful foliage, patterns and textures.

Look for plant signs with the Common Sense Gardening symbol at participating nurseries to easily identify these plants. Every time we plant, fertilize, water or control pests in our gardens, we can choose methods that protect personal health, protect the health of our environment and aid in the recovery of our local salmon runs.

Ground Covers (E) Evergreen (D) Deciduous

COMMON NAME - SCIENTIFIC NAME	*LOW WATER USE	EXPOSURE	REMARKS
Ajuga - <i>Ajuga reptans</i>	No	Part Shade	(E) One of the best known and most useful ground covers; fast growing; blue flowers in spring
Creeping Oregon Grape - <i>Mahonia repens</i>	Yes	Part Shade, Sun	(E) Native; yellow spring flowers and blue berries; attracts birds
Cotoneaster - <i>Cotoneaster</i> (all varieties)	Yes	Sun	(E/D) Good for erosion control, spring bloom; small pink flowers
False Lily-of-the-Valley - <i>Maianthemum dilatatum</i>	Yes	Shade, Part Shade, Sun	(D) Native; aggressive; good for woodland landscapes; showy spring flowers
Junipers - <i>Juniperus</i>	Yes	Sun	(E) Many varieties and sizes; all require sun and good drainage
Kinnikinnick (Bearberry) - <i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	Yes	Sun	(E) Native; glossy, bright green leaves; good for dry, steep slopes
Purple Wintercreeper - <i>Euonymus Fortunei</i>	Yes	Part Shade	(E) Highly valued for foliage, texture and form; will spread to about 18"
Salal - <i>Gautheria shallon</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	(E) Native; use under trees; attracts birds; size varies with location
Sweet Box Sarcocca - <i>Sarcocca hookeriana humilis</i>	Yes	Part Shade	(D) Tiny fragrant white flowers; best in shady locations, under trees
Wintergreen - <i>Gaultheria procumbens</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	(E) Dark green glossy leaves turn red in cold weather; berries and leaves have wintergreen flavor

Deciduous Vines

COMMON NAME - SCIENTIFIC NAME	*LOW WATER USE	EXPOSURE	REMARKS
Fiveleaf akebia - <i>Akebia quinata</i>	No	Sun, Part Shade	Pendulous stalks hold chocolate to rosy-purple fragrant flowers
Honeysuckle - <i>Lonicera</i>	Yes	Sun	Climbing vine or shrub; attracts hummingbirds; birds eat fall berries; <i>Haliana species</i> can be invasive
Kiwi - <i>Actinidia arguta</i> and <i>chinensis</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	<i>A. arguta</i> grows to 2', <i>A. chinensis</i> grows to 30'; need both male and female plants to fruit
Wisteria - <i>Wisteria</i>	Yes	Sun	Famous for its beautiful, fragrant spring flowers; buy cutting grown or grafted and when in bloom

*Please note: even low-water use plants need to be watered the first couple of summers after planting.

Evergreen Vines

COMMON NAME - SCIENTIFIC NAME	*LOW WATER USE	EXPOSURE	REMARKS
Euonymus - <i>Euonymus</i> (all varieties)	Yes	Sun	Vines and shrubs; some attract birds in fall; many valued varieties
Star Jasmine - <i>Trachelospermum</i> <i>jasminoides</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Versatile; to 15' long; leathery leaves; masses of fragrant star-shaped flowers

Deciduous Shrubs

COMMON NAME - SCIENTIFIC NAME	*LOW WATER USE	EXPOSURE	REMARKS
Barberry - <i>Berberis</i> (all varieties)	Yes	Sun	Hardy; evergreen and deciduous; many varieties available
Beauty Bush - <i>Kolkwitzia</i> <i>amabilis</i>	Yes	Sun	Large; attractive pink spring flowers that attract hummingbirds
Cotoneaster - <i>Cotoneaster</i> (all varieties)	Yes	Sun	Good for erosion control, spring bloom; small white or pink flowers; evergreen and deciduous
Currant, Red Flowering - <i>Ribes sanguineum</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Native; pink/red flowers in spring attract hummingbirds; birds eat berries
Dogwood, Red Osier - <i>Cornus cericea</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Native; striking red twigs for winter color and interest; plant in moist areas
Elderberry, Blue - <i>Sambucus cerulea</i>	Yes	Sun	Native; loose limbed; birds eat attractive blue berries
Elderberry, Red - <i>Sambucus</i> <i>racemosa</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Native; loose limbed; attracts birds; raw berries should not be eaten by humans
Forsythia - <i>Forsythia</i> (all varieties)	Yes	Sun	Fountain shaped; use as screen, borders; yellow spring flowers
Indian Plum (Oso Berry) - <i>Oemleria cerasiformis</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Native; grows to 15' tall with open arching branches; an early spring bloomer; attracts hummingbirds
Lilac (Maud Notcutt, William Robinson) - <i>Syringa</i>	Yes	Sun	Best known for fragrant, spring blossoms; ask nursery about other disease-resistant varieties
Maple, Vine - <i>Acer circinatum</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Native; attracts birds; wonderful "blazing" fall color; to 30' high
Mock Orange, Western - <i>Philadelphus lewisii</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Native; fragrant spring flowers; state flower of Idaho; select nursery stock from our local region
Ocean Spray - <i>Holodiscus</i> <i>discolor</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Native; profuse cluster of creamy white flowers; attracts birds and butterflies
Potentillas - <i>Potentilla</i> <i>fruticosa</i> (all varieties)	Yes	Sun	Blooms from June-October; yellow flowers; many varieties
Quince, Flowering - <i>Chaenomeles</i> (all varieties)	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Early bloomers; attractive flower; used as hedges and barriers; most are thorny; many varieties; deciduous and evergreen

Rose, Wild - <i>Rosa gymnocarpa and nutkana</i>	Yes	Sun	Native varieties - Baldhip, Nootka; birds eat rose hips that persist into winter
Salmonberry - <i>Ribes spectabilis</i>	Yes	Part Shade	Native; bright magenta early spring flowers; late summer orange/red berries; best in wild or naturalized section of garden
Serviceberry - <i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Native; showy spring flowers; attracts birds; up to 20' high
Smokebush - <i>Continus coggrygia</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Unusual and large shrub; attractive purple leaves and interesting summer blossoms
Snowberry - <i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Native; short, 3' to 6', will form a thicket that provides good shelter for birds; white berries persist into winter; erosion control on banks
Sumac, Smooth and Staghorn - <i>Rhus glabra and typhina</i>	Yes	Sun	Great for attracting birds; rich fall color and winter interest; up to 20' high in ten years
Viburnums - <i>Viburnum</i> (all varieties)	No	Sun	Large and diverse group of evergreen and deciduous plants; ask nursery for specifics

Evergreen Shrubs

COMMON NAME - SCIENTIFIC NAME	*LOW WATER USE	EXPOSURE	REMARKS
Abelia, Glossy - <i>Abelia grandiflora</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Best known and most popular of all Abelia's; good for borders; white or pink blossoms June-October
Escallonia - <i>Escallonia</i> (all varieties)	Yes	Sun	Fast-growing screen plants; many varieties; blooms in summer and fall; may freeze in 10-15 degrees, but recovers quickly
Hebe - <i>Hebe buxifolia</i>	Yes	Sun	Small; shaped easily into hedges
Huckleberry, Evergreen - <i>Vaccinium ovatum</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Native; spring flowers; dark berries good for baking; hedge or container plant; attracts birds
Laurel, Portuguese - <i>Prunus lusitanica</i>	Yes	Sun	Slower growing than English Laurel; useful background plant or hedge; small creamy white flowers
Osmanthus - <i>Osmanthus</i> (all varieties)	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Attractive leathery foliage; small fragrant flowers
Rock Rose - <i>Cistus</i>	Yes	Sun	Small and fast growing shrub; summer color; good choice for hot and dry locations
Strawberry Shrub - <i>Arbutus unedo</i> "compacta"	Yes	Sun	Slow-moderate growth; very tolerant of heat, sun and dry soil
Sunrose - <i>Helianthemum nummularium</i>	Yes	Sun	Small shrub; colorful blooms; many colors; late spring and summer
Tall Oregon Grape - <i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Waxy blue berries that appear in grape-like clusters; good for hedges, background
Wax Myrtle - <i>Myrica californica</i>	No	Sun, Part Shade	Broadleaf; grows to 20'; tolerates sandy or infertile soil
Yew - <i>Taxus</i> (many varieties)	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Used as hedges, screens; poisonous if eaten

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Deciduous Trees

COMMON NAME - SCIENTIFIC NAME	*LOW WATER USE	EXPOSURE	REMARKS
Apple ("Prima," Akane, Chehalis, Freedom, Spartan, and Liberty) - <i>Prunus</i>	No	Sun	These varieties are resistant to apple scab and powdery mildew; reduce water use by mulching
Box Elder, Variegated - <i>Acer negundo variegatum</i>	Yes	Sun	Fast growing; suckers; to 60' high; beautiful variegated foliage
Catalpa, Western - <i>Catalpa</i>	Yes	Sun	Flowers followed by large pods; 40'-70' high; protect from wind damage
Cherry, Sargent - <i>Prunus sargentii</i>	Yes	Sun	Good fall color and mahogany-colored bark. Fewer problems than other cherries. Good street tree.
Crabapple, Flowering (Beverly, Prairie Fire, Red Jewel, Sentinel, Silver Moon, Snowdraft, White Cascade) - <i>Malus</i>	No	Sun	Listed cultivars are rated as resistant to common fungus problems. These are just a few of the resistant varieties available
Dogwood, Korean - <i>Cornus kousa</i>	No	Sun	Resistant to dogwood anthracnose; beautiful long-lasting spring flowers; up to 20' high
Ginkgo (Maidenhair Tree) - <i>Ginkgo biloba</i>	Yes	Sun	Graceful hardy tree; grows slow first year; plant only male trees (females produce messy fruit); water in dry seasons until 10'-20' high. Reaches 35'-50' high
Maple, Amur - <i>Acer ginnala</i>	Yes	Sun	To 20' high; striking fall color; clusters of small and fragrant yellowish flowers
Maple, Big Leaf - <i>Acer macrophyllum</i>	Yes	Sun	Vigorous native maple. Grows 75-100 feet high. Dark green foliage up to a foot in diameter
Maple, Douglas - <i>Acer douglasii</i>	Yes	Part Shade	Native; grows up to 40' tall; fine fall color
Oak, Garry - <i>Quercus garryana</i>	Yes	Sun	40'-90' high; the only native oak in Washington; older specimens have intricate branching pattern
Rain-Tree, Golden - <i>Koelreuteria</i>	Yes	Sun	Pruning helps shape; good as street, lawn or terrace tree; 20'-35' high; 10'-40' spread; 8"-14" flower clusters; evergreen and deciduous
Redbud, Western - <i>Cercis occidentalis</i>	Yes	Sun	Handsome ornamental with showy magenta flowers
Silktree - <i>Albizia julibrissin</i>	Yes	Sun	Shade tree; flat-topped canopy; pink flowers; pods; 40' high; can be trimmed to 10'-10' umbrella
Sweet Gum - <i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	Yes	Sun	Large tree; beautiful fall color; few pest problems; subject to top breakage on windy sites
Zelkova, Sawleaf and Zelkova, Japanese - <i>Zelkova serrata</i>	Yes	Sun	Good shade tree; moderate-fast growth; looks similar to Elm; 60' high; equal spread

Evergreen Trees

COMMON NAME - SCIENTIFIC NAME	*LOW WATER USE	EXPOSURE	REMARKS
Cedar, Atlas - <i>Cedrus</i>	Yes	Sun	60' to 100' feet high; 30' spread
Cedar, Incense - <i>Calocedrus decurrens</i>	Yes	Part Shade	Native; once established may grow 2' per year; deep but infrequent watering in youth will assist drought tolerance when mature; good windbreak; 75'-90' high
Cedar, Western Red - <i>Thuja plicata</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Native; versatile; young trees sheared to form a hedge; good choice for large areas; long lived, rot resistant
Cypress, Leyland - <i>Cupressocyparis leylandii</i>	Yes	Sun	Fast growing; most planted as quick screening
Fir, Grand - <i>Abies grandis</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	Large, handsome native with dark, green foliage
Hemlock, Mountain - <i>Tsuga mertensiana</i>	Yes	Part Shade	Durable native; slow growing in lowland conditions; 50'-90' high
Myrtle, Oregon - <i>Umbellularia California</i>	Yes	Sun	Broadleaf evergreen, leaves glossy and aromatic; grows slowly in many areas; up to 75' high
Pine, Shore - <i>Pinus contorta</i> (and most varieties)	Yes	Sun	Fast growing native; 30' high; easily trained to produce unusual, striking shapes

Perennials (P), Annuals (A), and Biennials (B)

COMMON NAME - SCIENTIFIC NAME	*LOW WATER USE	EXPOSURE	REMARKS
Alyssum - <i>Alyssum</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	(P) Spring bloom; mounding plants used as borders, often in rock gardens; yellow
Aubrieta - <i>Aubrieta</i>	Yes	Sun	(P) Low growing mat; long flowering period; good for rock gardens and trailing over walls
Basket of Gold - <i>Aurinia</i>	Yes	Sun	(P) Low growing; dense cluster of yellow spring flowers are a good accent in a rock garden or trailing over a rock wall
Blanket Flowers - <i>Gaillardia grandiflora</i>	Yes	Sun	(P) Blooms late spring until frost; daisy-like red, yellow and orange flowers
Bleeding Heart - <i>Dicentra formosa</i>	Yes	Shade, Part Shade	(P) Fern-like leaves and pink heart-shaped flowers
California Poppy - <i>Eschscholzia californica</i>	Yes	Sun	Reseed themselves easily; oranges, yellows, reds
Candytuft - <i>Iberis</i>	Yes	Sun	(P) Spreading 12" perennial with spring to summer blossoms; good for rock gardens or trailing over walls
Columbine - <i>Aquilegia</i>	Yes	Sun	(P) Lacy foliage; spring, early summer blooms; attract hummingbirds; many colors
Coreopsis - <i>Coreopsis</i>	Yes	Sun	(P) Blooms nearly all summer; yellow, orange and red; tend to self-sow

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Cornflower, Sweet Sultan - <i>Centaurea</i>	Yes	Sun	(A/P) Many varieties; annuals grown for cut flowers; perennials for soft silvery foliage
Cosmos - <i>Cosmos</i>	Yes	Sun	(A) Showy summer and fall daisy-like flowers; great in borders; attract birds; beneficial insects
Coastal Strawberry - <i>Fragaria chiloensis</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	(P) Forms low, compact mats; 6"-12" high
Cotton Lavender - <i>Santolina chamaecyparissus</i>	Yes	Sun	(P) Plant as ground cover, edging; grows in any soil; yellow button flowers in summer
Dusty Miller - <i>Senecio cineraria</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	(P) Shrubby; yellow or creamy flowers almost all year long
Gayfeathers - <i>Liatris</i>	Yes	Sun	(P) Summer blooms; rosy purple; best used in mixed perennial borders; choice cut flowers
Lavender - <i>Lavandula</i>	Yes	Sun	(P) Fragrant purple flowers used for perfume or sachets
Marguerite - <i>Chrysanthemum frutescens</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	(P) Summer blooms; many colors; good as container plant
Marjorams, Oregano - <i>Origanum</i>	Yes	Sun	(P) Summer blooms-white; herb, useful in cooking
Moss Rose - <i>Portulaca grandiflora</i>	Yes	Sun	(A) Blooms early summer to frost; lustrous rosy colors; flowers open only in the sun; self sow
Poppies - <i>Papaver</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	(A/P) Spring and summer bloomers; good for borders and cutting; white, orange, pink, red
Rosemary - <i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	Yes	Sun	(P) Aromatic leaves; bluish flower; attracts birds; used in cooking
Rudbeckia - <i>Rudbeckia</i>	Yes	Sun	(B/P) Oranges, yellow with black
Sage - <i>Salvia</i>	Yes	Sun	(A/P) Many beautiful and aromatic varieties; avoid noxious meadow clary, clary sage, and Mediterranean salvia
Sedum - <i>Sedum</i>	Yes	Sun	(P) Ground cover to sub-shrub; succulent; many varieties
Speedwell - <i>Veronica</i>	No	Sun, Part Shade	(P) Reliable plants, purple blue flowers, attracts beneficial insects
Sweet William, Carnation, Clove pink, - <i>Dianthus</i>	Yes	Sun	(B/P) Spring blooms; pinks, purples, whites, many varieties and sizes
Sword Fern - <i>Polystichum munitum</i>	Yes	Sun, Part Shade	(P) Native fern; tolerates full sun; prefers part shade
Thrift, Sea Pink - <i>Armeria</i>	Yes	Sun	(P) Sturdy dependable plants for edging walks or borders
Verbena - <i>Verbena</i>	Yes	Sun	(A/P) Ground cover; fast growers; summer blooms; many colors
Wooly Thyme - <i>Thymus Pseudolanuginosus</i>	Yes	Sun	(P) Ground cover; leaves are covered with tiny gray hairs
Yarrow - <i>Achillea</i>	Yes	Sun	(P) Carefree and generous bloomers in summer and fall; many colors; attracts beneficial insects

Common Sense Gardening

The Common Sense Gardening program seeks to reduce our reliance on pesticides and synthetic fertilizers and create water-smart landscapes. For more information on landscape planning, see the Common Sense Gardening Guide "Plan Before You Plant." It's available at participating nurseries, or by calling Thurston County at (360) 754-4111 or TDD (360) 754-2933. These Common Sense Gardening Guides are also available: "Common Sense Gardening – How Does it Work?," "Lawn Care," "Aphids," "Crane Flies" and "Root Weevils."

You can safely dispose of unwanted yard and garden pesticides at HazoHouse, Thurston County's household hazardous waste collection center. Call the Thurston County WasteLine at (360) 754-4348 for more information.

By conserving water, reducing reliance on pesticides and synthetic fertilizers, and by safely disposing of unwanted hazardous products, common sense gardeners are protecting our drinking water, our streams, rivers and Puget Sound.

Local Resources

Dirt Works, located behind Yauger Park in West Olympia, and Closed Loop Park, at the Hawks Prairie Solid Waste and Resource Recovery Center, offer demonstrations on Common Sense Gardening including composting techniques and drip irrigation systems. For more information, please call the WSU Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Program at (360) 786-5445 ext. 7908. Call the Native Plant Salvage Project at (360) 704-7785 for information on Native Plant Demonstration Garden sites.

Further Reading

Chemical-Free Yard & Garden, Rodale Press, 1991

Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Arthur Kruckeberg, University of Washington Press, 1996

Grow Your Own Native Landscape, Michael Leigh, Native Plant Salvage Program, Cooperative Extension, Washington State University, 1999

Naturescaping: A Place for Wildlife. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, P.O. Box 59, Portland, Oregon 97201, 1993


Pacific Northwest Landscape IPM Manual (Culture of Key Trees and Shrubs) Cooperative Extension, Washington State University, Puyallup, 1996

Plant Materials for Landscaping - A List of Plants for the Pacific Northwest, A Pacific Northwest Extension Publication, Oregon State University, 1996

Sunset Garden Book, Sunset Publishing Company, 1995



This booklet is part of Thurston County's Hazardous Waste Program, which serves all residents of Thurston County. It is a joint effort of Thurston County, its cities and the Washington State Department of Ecology.

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