WHY NATIVE PLANTS MATTER

Native plants support all other living things and are instrumental in sustaining biodiversity and resilient landscapes. Myriad native animals—from insects to mammals—rely on them for food, nesting sites, and shelter. Native plants also keep ecosystems balanced by filtering water, reducing erosion, and improving soil health.

Since native plants are well adapted to regional climate, soils, and pests, they ultimately require less fertilizer, water, and pesticides. Even further, native plants provide us with an important sense of place and connection to our region.

Today, we have the opportunity to rethink our landscapes in a way that allows for all life—not just human life—to thrive. Where to begin? Learning about native plants and returning more of them to the land is an excellent place to start!

Western Sword Fern (Polystichum munitum)

ABOUT OXBOW

Oxbow Farm & Conservation Center is located on 240 acres of diverse forest and farmland in Carnation, WA. Oxbow researches and practices regenerative farming and restoration methods, grows food and native plants, and educates people of all ages about agriculture and the environment through year-round programming and events.

Collectively, Oxbow's work takes real-time action to combat climate change, promote biodiversity, and encourage healthy food systems.

OXBOW'S MISSION

To inspire people to eat healthy, sustainably grown food and to steward our natural resources for future generations.

oxbow.org | 10819 Carnation-Duvall RD NE Carnation, WA | nativeplants@oxbow.org | 425-788-1154 ext 1

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Nootka Rose (Rosa nutkana)

A CASE FOR NATIVES

Oxbow

OXBOW'S NATIVE PLANT NURSERY (NPN)

We aim to ignite a native plant movement through propagation, inspiration, and education, in order to support the conservation and health of our region's wildlife and ecosystems.

Oxbow seeks to facilitate meaningful connections between people and native plants by:

- Producing high quality, locally adapted, and genetically diverse native plants
- Providing experiences and information that help others to understand, grow, and use native plants.
- Cultivating partnerships between the many stakeholders who are working to promote increased appreciation and use of native plants in local ecosystems.

DID YOU KNOW?

The NPN grows approximately 160 ecologically important species for habitat restoration, urban landscaping, and retail nurseries. You can shop a splendid selection at Oxbow's Farm Stand and annual Native Plant Sales.

NATIVE PLANTS SUPPORT:

POLLINATORS

For millennia, native plants and pollinators have coevolved in response to environmental conditions and to each other's needs. Because of this enduring relationship, native plants' traits are beautifully matched to the preferences and behaviors of native insects and birds—providing ready sources of nectar, pollen, seeds, and habitat.

Approximately 90% of insects that eat plants require a native plant to complete their life cycle. Did you know that caterpillars from various butterfly species rely on specific host plants for survival? For example:

- Bigleaf Maple, Vine Maple, and Douglas Maple host Western Tiger Swallowtail caterpillars
- Stinging Nettle hosts Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Tortoiseshell, and Satyr Angelwing caterpillars
- Our native violets host Greater Fritillary caterpillars (non-native sweet violet is inedible to the caterpillar)

Native plants that share strong relationships with butterflies and moths also play a direct role in supporting bird populations. Many birds rely on caterpillars as a primary source of food for raising their young.

Also, there are several species of bees and wasps, known as specialists, that prefer pollen from very specific plant families. Notably, flowers belonging to the Asteraceae family (such as Yarrow, Woolly Sunflower, and Western Goldenrod) have been observed in the Pacific Northwest hosting more than 296 species of bee specialists, both common and rare.

NATIVE FAUNA & FUNGI

The mutualism between native plants and pollinators provide the foundation for a healthy food web of other plants, animals, and decomposers (including banana slugs and oyster mushrooms)! Native plants produce fruits, seeds and foliage that provide shelter and sustenance for a wide array of animals—from small amphibians like Pacific tree frogs to large mammals like black bears.

OTHER NATIVE FLORA

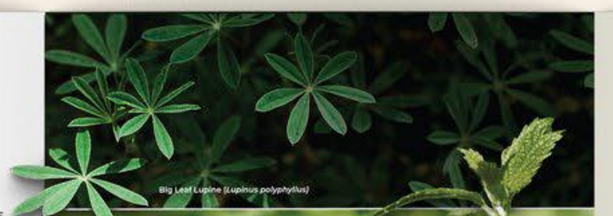
Native plants do not grow in a monoculture. In Washington's wild woodlands and prairies, you may notice that native plants thrive alongside many different species. There are benefits to diversifying plant species in the landscape, as certain plants attract and support insects that control pests or pollinate other species.

WATER CONSERVATION

The deep roots, efficient water usage, and compatibility of native plants with local rainfall patterns result in reduced irrigation needs and less water waste, which helps to conserve this precious resource. Moreover, native plants play a crucial role in maintaining water quality by preventing soil erosion and filtering pollutants from runoff.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Native plants in the Pacific Northwest are expected to exhibit greater resilience in the context of climate change compared to non-native species. They have developed strong adaptations to the region's weather patterns, including summer drought, making them more likely than many non-local plant species to successfully withstand and help mitigate the impacts of further climate change.


Big Leaf Lupine (*Lupinus polyphyllus*)


Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) & Red Admiral butterfly (*Vanessa atalanta*)


Showy Fleabane (*Erigeron speciosus*)

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Whether a pot on a porch or several acres of land, think of your outdoor space as an ecosystem that can provide for a community of organisms including pollinators, birds, soil microbes, and humans, too!

Within your ecosystem, grow native plants, and encourage your friends and neighbors to do the same. According to ecologist Doug Tallamy, "If half of American lawns were replaced with native plants, we would create the equivalent of a 20 million acre national park, nine times bigger than Yellowstone or 100 times bigger than Shenandoah National Park." If we all thought of our yards and gardens as part of a "Homegrown National Park" we could create more contiguous healthy ecosystems that promote biodiversity, produce oxygen, clean water, control floods, store carbon, and sustain us.

Start small and choose plants that interest you. Do you want to grow food? Support pollinators? Attract birds? Talk to native plant nurseries to get advice on what plants might be best for your space and goals.

WESTERN WASHINGTON KEYSTONE PLANTS

Certain plants are identified as keystone species for their ability to provide habitat for a significant variety of wildlife including caterpillars, birds, and bees. Their presence is pivotal in the structure of a healthy food web. By planting just one keystone species, you can help restore biodiversity!

TREE: Bigleaf maple (Acer macrophyllum) **SHRUBS:** Pacific Willow (Salix lasiandra) and Evergreen Huckleberry (Vaccinium ovatum)
PERENNIAL FLOWER: Western Goldenrod (Solidago lepida) **NO YARD? NO PROBLEM!** Try Showy Fleabane (Erigeron speciosus) in a container!

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