

# Going native (with yard plants)



**Carol Dalu**  
*Master Gardener*

**Question:** I would like to have more bees, birds and butterflies in my yard. I’ve heard adding native plants will help attract them. Can you provide information about growing natives and suggest plants for our area?

**Answer:** Native plants are those that occur naturally in a region in which they evolved, and are the foundation of a bio-diverse landscape that supports birds, butterflies, pollinators and more.

Native plants provide the food and shelter wildlife needs and prefers; the addition of native plants will help increase the number of bees, birds and butterflies visiting your yard. The flowers of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants provide nectar for many types of hummingbirds and insects like butterflies. Seeds and berries provide food for birds and other wildlife, and trees and shrubs provide shelter and nesting spots for birds, squirrels and other creatures.

Native plants have grown in our region for thousands of years and are used to our climate – wet winters and dry summers. Natives can be established in any garden as long as they are placed in an environment according to their needs for sun or shade and moisture.

It is important to know which ones prefer shaded, damp forests or the dry, sunny prairies. In western Oregon, the area from the Cascades to the Coast, there are many varieties of native plants for both sun and shade locations, including groundcovers, shrubs, herbs and ferns, and trees. Once established, native plants can be fairly low maintenance.

To establish native plants in your yard it is helpful to review the locations and amount of space you have available. Within this wide range of plants there are very small, delicate groundcovers to shrubs and trees that grow quite large, so you will want to know how much space you have to dedicate to natives before purchasing.

If you have a fairly manicured yard, some natives may look a bit out of place, so locating them around the perimeter or back border will provide a natural setting for them.

Once you’ve determined the plants you wish to add, use the same care as you would when establishing other plants



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Blue elderberry, botanical name *Sambucus Mexicana*, is a full sun shrub native to our area.



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Wood sorrel, botanical name *Oxalis oregana*, is a partial to full shade plant native to our area.



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Cascade Oregon grape, botanical name *Mahonia nervosa*, is a partial to full shade shrub native to our area.

– ensure you have good soil with adequate organic matter and nutrients, and water until established, which can be up to 2-3 years for shrubs and trees.

Use fertilizer sparingly, and be patient – some natives take a bit longer to establish as they have not been bred for typical garden conditions.

Below is a sampling of plants for sunny to shady locations listed by common names with the botanical name. When purchasing natives, make sure to select the native plant and not a hybrid variety.

**SUN**

- Groundcovers & Perennials*
- Coastal strawberry (*Fragaria chiloensis*)
  - Great camas or wild hyacinth (*Camassia leichtlinii*)
  - Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)
  - Nodding onion (*Allium cernuum*)
  - Oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*)

- Tufted Hairgrass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*)
  - Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium* var. *occidentalis*)
- Shrubs & Trees*
- Blue elderberry (*Sambucus Mexicana*)
  - Hairy Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos columbiana*)
  - Incense cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*)
  - Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*)
  - Red flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*)
  - Squaw carpet (*Ceanothus prostratus*)
  - Western azalea (*Rhododendron occidentale*)
- PARTIAL TO FULL SHADE**
- Groundcovers & Perennials*
- Broadleaf stonecrop (*Sedum spathulifolium*)
  - Columbian larkspur (*Delphinium troliifolium*)
  - Deer fern (*Blechnum spicant*)
  - Goatsbeard (*Aruncus dioicus*)

- Western bleeding heart (*Dicentra formosa*)
  - Western columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*)
  - Wood sorrel (*Oxalis oregana*)
- Trees & Shrubs*
- Cascade Oregon grape (*Mahonia nervosa*)
  - Pacific Rhododendron (*Rhododendron macrophyllum*)
  - Red huckleberry (*Vaccinium parviflorum*)
  - Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*)
  - Vine Maple (*Acer circinatum*)
  - Western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*)
  - Western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*)

In addition to adding native plants, you may want to add sources of water for the wildlife, such as a bird bath, shallow rocks that capture water, or a moist shady area

under brush. By adding native plants and enhancing the environment preferred by birds, bees and butterflies you should see more wildlife in your yard. And as an added bonus, you will be improving the biodiversity of your local environment.

For more plant options and information on growing native plants, visit [www.catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/ec1577](http://www.catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/ec1577) to download a copy of the catalogue “Gardening with Oregon Native Plants West of the Cascades.” You may also wish to visit the Native Plant Society of Oregon at [www.npsoregon.org](http://www.npsoregon.org)

*Do you have a gardening question? Contact the Douglas County Master Gardeners via email at [douglasmg@oregonstate.edu](mailto:douglasmg@oregonstate.edu), by phone at 541-672-4461 or visit 1134 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg.*