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March 2014

Northwest Native Plant Journal

A Monthly Web Magazine

Native climbers...p8

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Spring weeds...p28

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About this Journal

This Journal was created under the direction of Wally Hansen – a dedicated Grower, Aficionado and Passionate Lover of Northwest Native Plants.

This Journal is not 'commercial.' Our goals are:

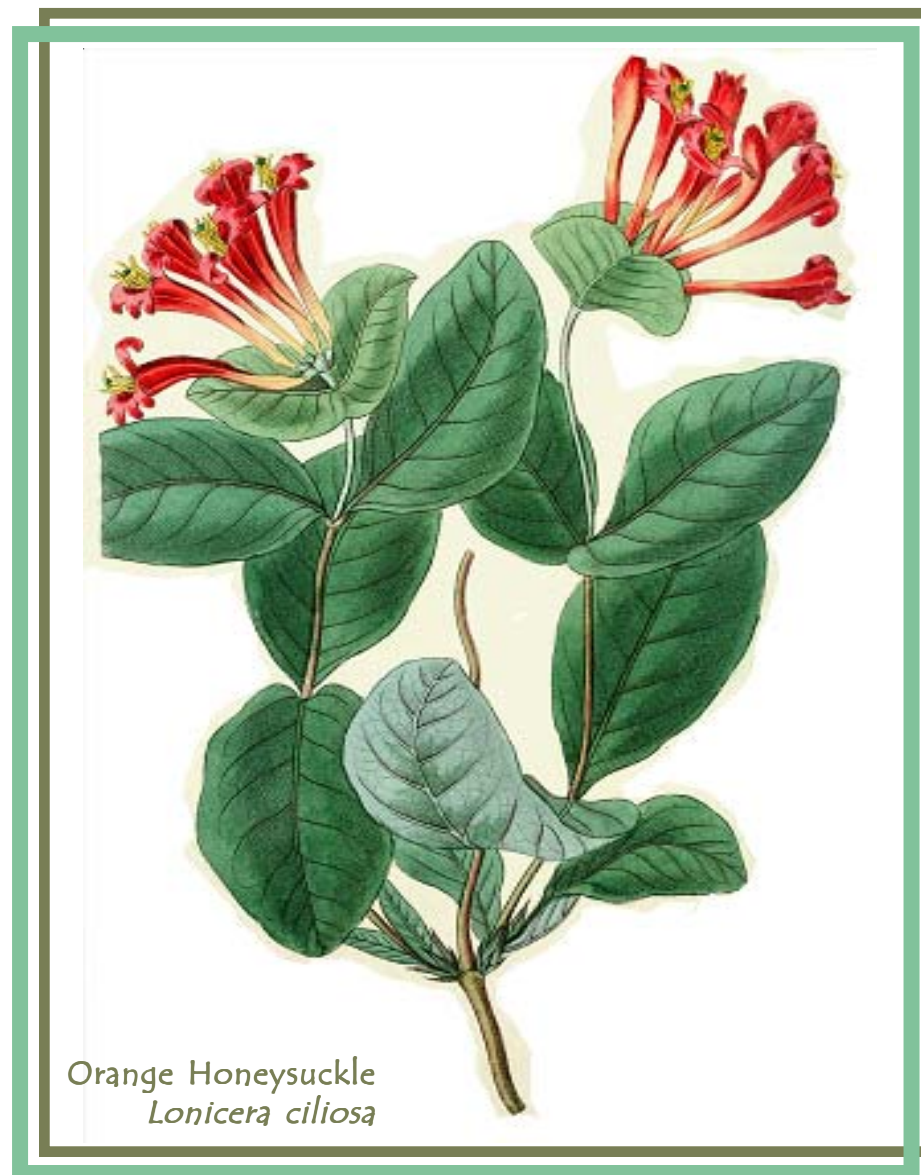
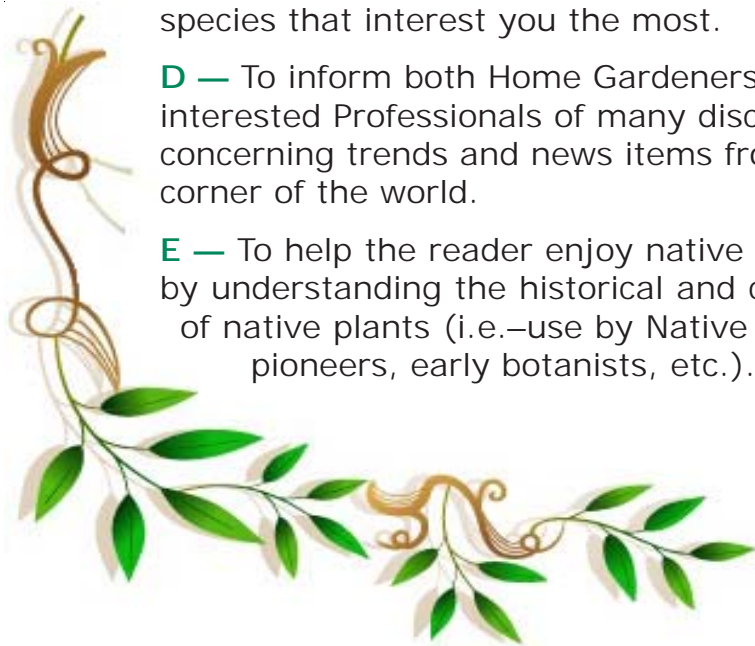
A — To generate interest, even passion, concerning the magnificent Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest.

B — To help you create your own Native Plant Gardens, large or small, for home or work.

C — To help you propagate and "grow on" those species that interest you the most.

D — To inform both Home Gardeners and interested Professionals of many disciplines concerning trends and news items from my little corner of the world.

E — To help the reader enjoy native plants more by understanding the historical and cultural role of native plants (i.e.—use by Native Americans, pioneers, early botanists, etc.).



Orange Honeysuckle
Lonicera ciliosa



On the Cover: Serviceberry



Serviceberry *Amelanchier alnifolia*

A lovely deciduous shrub native to the Pacific northwest with fruit some prefer over wild huckleberries (*Vaccinium*).

See article beginning on page 17: At your service, for more information on this plant.



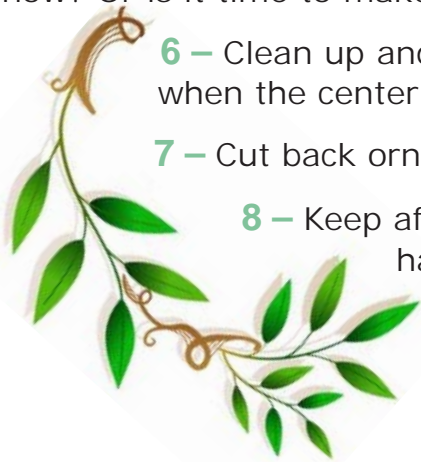
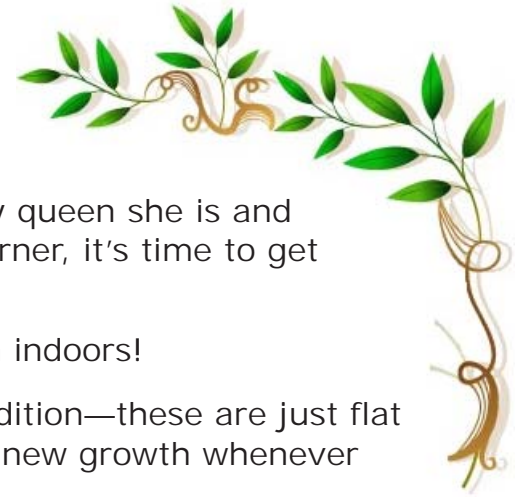
Garden chores to do now

Pearly bits of wisdom and just plain common sense

Sunshine, snow, hail and rain. March comes in like a lion, prances about like the gypsy queen she is and leaves in a huff. Spring is so much fun! Now that this season is officially around the corner, it's time to get out and take a look at the garden.

- 1 – Prune off flowering shrubs as they bloom (or prune them now and enjoy the bloom indoors!)
- 2 – Frost may occur, and often. I keep a couple of old “sheet blankets” (a southern tradition—these are just flat sheets made of flannel) in my potting bench ready to drape over whatever has tender new growth whenever there is threat of frost.
- 3 – Slugs are awakening and becoming more active. Start your chosen treatment now. Rake up debris so the slugs won't feel so at home.
- 4 – Inspect your trees for winter damage. Trim up broken branches. Use them as ‘a la carte’ tenting when you need to protect beds or bushes.
- 5 – Get out your gardening journal and remind yourself of all those plans you made last year. Time to start them now? Or is it time to make a new plan?
- 6 – Clean up and divide perennials that flower in summer or fall now. You can tell perennials need dividing when the center becomes less vigorous or dies out.
- 7 – Cut back ornamental grasses to a few inches above the ground to make way for new growth.
- 8 – Keep after weeds. You may not have been working out in the garden but the cool weather weeds have already been busy. Pull weeds like shot weed before they finish seeding to reduce next years weeding chores.

For yourself, get some fresh air, clear out the cobwebs, start getting in shape for gardening time!



So glad you asked!

Readers speak up: Questions, suggestions, pats and pans

Garden development:

We are in the process of moving toward backyard bird habitat planting and are excited about the addition of native plants to our yard (which is been neglected with raising children). I have a long fence area where I want to do a native hedgerow of mixed plants, as well as a number of other areas where I have an idea or two. Also a strip by the driveway that is begging for a mass planting of low water, full sun plants. That is where I get stuck, however.

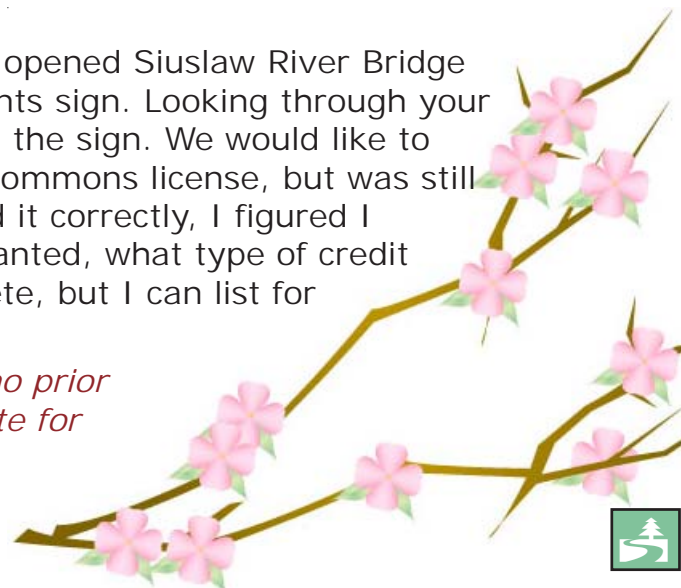
Can you recommend someone who could help us with a plan as to how to proceed with the basic structure and some of the main shrubs/trees/plants, and then we can start filling in from there? --Connie

Connie--love your project! On our homepage, see the Native Plant Landscrapers link in the Resources section. I have no personal experience with any of them, they were recommended by our readers. Please keep us tuned in on your progress. Maybe share some photos?

Photo library:

I have been working on designing interpretive signage for our newly opened Siuslaw River Bridge Interpretive Center. One of the signs I am working on is a Native Plants sign. Looking through your website, you have great photos of the plants we will be describing on the sign. We would like to use pictures off your site for the sign. I read through your Creative Commons license, but was still unsure on how permission worked, so, rather than hope I understood it correctly, I figured I would contact you directly for the permission and, if permission is granted, what type of credit line you would want on the sign. The design of the sign is not complete, but I can list for you what plants will be on there. --Shawn

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Wildlife Corner

Out back with the animals

Again with the squirrel breaking and entering! Lesson was not sufficiently communicated. One would think the banging and yelling and stick prodding the last time would have clearly convinced the squirrel neighbors that wildlife food bins are not self-serve, right? 'Sho nuff' as they say down south. Yet here she is again, all comfy and cozy.

Note the problem on her tail. I don't know how (or what) got her. They stripped the hair off one side of her tail leaving an area about 1/3 of the overall tail length denuded and only on one side. The only visible wound is the dark red stripe near one end of the "scalped" area. Up close I could see that it appeared fairly fresh with somewhat of a scab growing over the open in her skin. It looks like the tail itself may be broken--that bend in the tail looks unnatural to me. However, Jeff carried the container over to the edge of the lower deck and tipped it a bit and she shot out of there like a bullet. We saw no indication that her funky looking tail impeded her ability to move. I've kept an eye on her since then. She and her three companions are at the feeders several times a day and the fur looks like it's growing back. Squirrels rely on their tails for movement so I'm very glad she is not permanently disabled.

Some folks do not appreciate squirrels and try to keep them out of the wildlife area. I enjoy the four that live here. They are just part of the neighborhood. They and the birds are compatible. They all eat the food, sometimes both species come to the feeders at the same time without a squabble. It's all good. I don't think it's my job to filter the wildlife. All are welcome.



Vertical gardening

Native vines of the Pacific northwest

Discover unused garden real estate in your landscape. These vines sport beautiful, aromatic flowers that attract birds and butterflies, some sort of fruit or seed and colorful fall foliage.

Vining plants planted next to a trellis, fence, or other support will climb to new heights, giving an exciting vista where there was none. A simple frame made of found objects such as old bicycle tires, window frames, an old bed, interesting gates or fences--whatever materials you have--can be used as a 'wall' or divider to define an outdoor room, to surround a vegetable garden, to block off a compost bin or set aside a space for garbage cans. Each of these structures can play host to climbing plants. Think beyond pole beans or peas or squash. The Pacific northwest has a fairly wide selection of evergreen, deciduous and perennial plants that reach for the sky naturally. Some will want help as they learn where you want them to climb, but even those that need some training to start with will soon get the hang of acceptable climbing.

This type of garden is easily tailored for those of us that rely on wheelchairs, walkers or other aids to mobility. There are no official rules in the Americans with Disabilities Act for gardens, but trellis's are one way to go. A trellis or other support can be used with raised bins or set up for plants in the ground.

If vertical gardening is not your cup of tea, most of these natives can also be used as groundcovers to fill in bare spots in the landscape.



Songbirds of America visiting Pacific Blackberry. Recycled bicycle wheel trellis from Kirksville Permaculture Education Center at <http://www.kvpermaculture.org/>

⇒More⇒

Vertical gardening, continued

Common name(s): Arrowleaf Tearthumb

Scientific name: *Polygonum sagittatum*

Blossom/fruit/fall leaf color: Red flowers

Bloom/fruit time: April, May

Environment: Wet; marshes, swamps, streambanks



Photo by RW Smith



Common name(s): California Wild Grape

Scientific name: *Vitis californica*

Blossom/fruit/fall leaf color: Fragrant yellow-green blossoms. fall leaves turn many shades of orange and yellow, edible purple grapes in autumn

Bloom/fruit time: May, June. Fruit in fall

Environment: Regular moisture but not too wet, full sun. Once established it thrives without summer water.

[⇒More⇒](#)

Vertical gardening, continued

Common name(s): Chaparral False Bindweed

Scientific name: *Calystegia occidentalis*

Blossom/fruit/fall leaf color: White to creamy-yellow flowers

Bloom/fruit time: May, Jun, Jul, Aug

Environment: Grows in hilly and mountain habitat, such as woodland and chaparral slopes and the high Sierra Nevada



Photo by Tom Hilton



Hop flowers, fruit. Photos by RW Smith



Common name(s): Common Hop

Scientific name: *Humulus lupulus*

Blossom/fruit/fall leaf color: Fragrant yellow flowers

Bloom/fruit time: Spring

Environment: When dormant, withstands freezing; severe frost will kill young, tender vines in spring. Annual rainfall requirement is about 30 cm, between March - August. Dry weather in September is best for the harvest. Do well over a wide range of soils. Light to heavy loams are best.

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Vertical gardening, continued

Common name(s): Fewflower Pea, Steppe Sweetpea

Scientific name: *Lathyrus pauciflorus*

Blossom/fruit/fall leaf color: Pink, Blue flowers fade to inky blue

Bloom/fruit time: Apr, May, Jun

Environment: Grasslands, dry woods, sagebrush slopes.

Photo by WD & Dolphia Bransford



Common name(s): Marsh Pea, Marsh Vetchling

Scientific name: *Lathyrus palustris*

Blossom/fruit/fall leaf color: Red, Pink, Purple

Bloom/fruit time: July and August

Environment: Wet meadows and marshes

Photo by Phyllis Weyland



[⇒ More ⇒](#)

Vertical gardening, continued

Common name(s): Orange Honeysuckle

Scientific name: *Lonicera ciliosa*

Blossom/fruit/fall leaf color: Red/orange blossoms, fruits are edible either raw or cooked, but are not a common food

Bloom/fruit time: May to July

Environment: Open to dense woods, mountains.



Photo by Terry Glase



Common name(s): Pacific Blackberry

Scientific name: *Rubus ursinus*

Blossom/fruit/fall leaf color: Blooms are white and fragrant, sweet, very aromatic. Edible fruits are dark purple to black

Bloom/fruit time: May to June

Environment: Grows in filtered to full shade of a creek bank. In coastal areas grows from full shade to full sun, in the interior it will hide more in the shade. Generally moist places, scrub, streamsides

Photo by Walter Siegmund

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Vertical gardening, continued

Common name(s): Pink Honeysuckle, Hairy Honeysuckle, California Honeysuckle, Western Honeysuckle, Pink Chaparral Honeysuckle

Scientific name: *Lonicera hispidula*

Blossom/fruit/fall leaf color: Though usually pink, blooms can also be muted to a white, darkened to rose or purple, or tinged with yellow

Bloom/fruit time: May, Jun

Environment: Sun, part shade, shade. Dry, moist. open woods and shrublands from southwest British Columbia to southwest California.

Photo by Walter Siegmund



Common name(s): Rock Clematis

Scientific name: *Clematis columbiana*

Blossom/fruit/fall leaf color: Nodding, blue to reddish-purple solitary flowers on short branches from the axils of three-parted leaves. Flowers are followed by a fragile, plumed seedhead.

Bloom/fruit time: Jun to July

Environment: Prefers deep moist soil with its roots in the shade. Dry to moist soils of woods and thickets, from valleys to around 2,500 metres in the mountains

Photo by WD & Dolphia Bransford



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Vertical gardening, continued

Common name(s): Scaldweed, Dodder

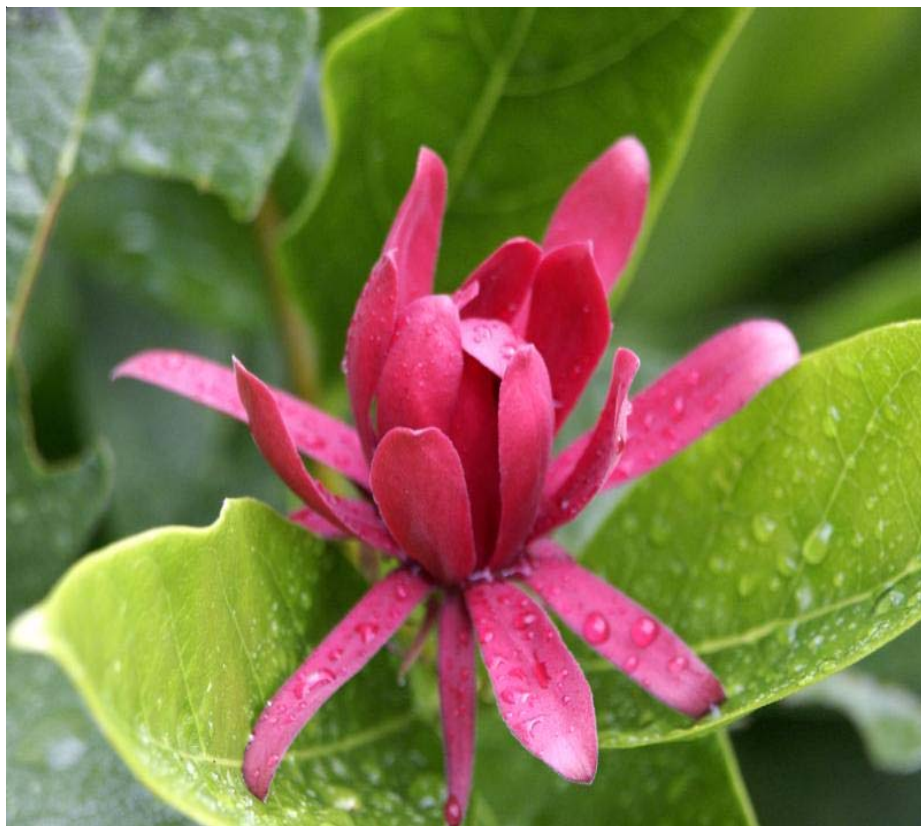
Scientific name: *Cuscuta gronovii*

Blossom/fruit/fall leaf color: Dense cluster of mostly stalkless flowers

Bloom/fruit time: July-Oct

Environment: Moist

Photo by Kitty Kohout/University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point



Common name(s): Spicebush

Scientific name: *Calycanthus occidentalis*

Blossom/fruit/fall leaf color: Fragrant burgundy flowers

Bloom/fruit time: April - August

Environment: Likes sun to partial shade and moist soil. It is tolerant to sandy or clay soils, and likes water.

Photo by Scott Zona

[⇒More⇒](#)

Vertical gardening, continued

Common name(s): Vine Maple

Scientific name: *Acer circinatum*

Blossom/fruit/fall leaf color: Leaves turn bright yellow to orange-red in fall. Flower sepals red-purple; petals greenish white spring.

Bloom/fruit time: April to May

Environment: Full to partial sun

Famous fall color.

Lesser known but
equally lovely flower,
Photo by Walter
Siegmund



Common name(s): Western Clematis, Virgin's Bower

Scientific name: *Clematis ligusticifolia*

Blossom/fruit/fall leaf color: White flowers

Bloom/fruit time: Apr - Aug

Environment: Part to full sun. After first season, become a more drought tolerant and as tough as nails. Tolerates sand, clay, serpentine, seasonal flooding and browsing deer.

POISONOUS: All parts. Severe pain in mouth if eaten; skin irritation if touched or inhaled. Symptoms: burning sensation of mouth/mouth ulcers; skin redness/burning.

Photo by Terry Glase

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Vertical gardening, continued

Common name(s): Whitebark Raspberry

Scientific name: *Rubus leucodermis*

Blossom/fruit/fall leaf color: White or pink blossoms, white and infrequently light purple flowers. The fruit is 1–1.2 cm diameter, red to reddish-purple at first, turning dark purple to nearly black when ripe.

Bloom/fruit time: April, May

Environment: Fields and open to wooded hillsides, from low to moderate elevations.

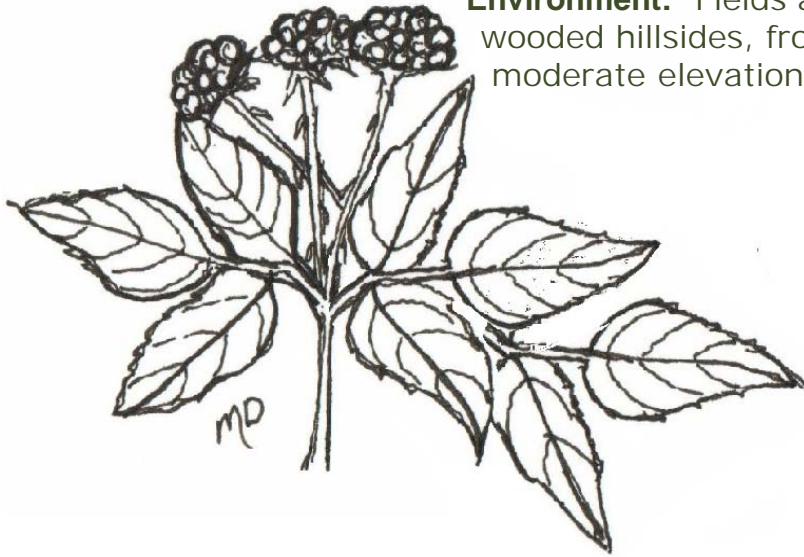


Photo by Stickpen

Fruit photo by
Zoya Akulova

For more about ADA gardening, see:

The Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, www.christopherreeve.org/site/c.mtKZKgMWKwG/b.5300837/k.7D2E/Gardening_from_a_Wheelchair.htm

Trellis Gardening, University of Missouri Extension's AgrAbility website, www.agrability.missouri.edu/gardenweb/Trellis.html

Organic Gardening's Vertical Gardening, www.organicgardening.com/learn-and-grow/vertical-gardening



At your service

Northwest native Serviceberry

Whether you call the *Amelanchier alnifolia* by its most common name of Serviceberry or one of its more exotic names such as Saskatoon, Shadbush, Shadblow, Indian Pear, Juneberry or May Cherry, you'll fall in love with this northwest native shrub.

Plant some of the extraordinarily fine *Amelanchier alnifolia*, sometimes available in bare root form, in your landscape this spring for years of enjoyment. It's a fine ornamental with sprightly flowers and delicious fruit. In Canada where it's usually called "Saskatoon Berry," the fruit is so much enjoyed the plant is grown commercially for the fruit.

Birds are particularly fond of this native. It is not unusual for a whole flock to alight on a Serviceberry when the fruit is ripe. They have quite a conversation as they noisily enjoy the fine berries, chatting and chirping and singing little trills. You might plant an extra shrub or two so there will be enough fruit to share. You won't want to miss out on a Sarvisberry pie or some jam. Delicious! If you have enough berries, try a batch of homemade wine.



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At your service, continued

A choice deciduous shrub, Serviceberry reaches 6 – 10.' Serviceberry is extremely hardy, ranging from the Pacific coast to the prairies, USDA zones, 3-10. Found on rocky, dry slopes and well-drained thickets, Serviceberry prefers full sun and, aside from a generous layer of mulch, will require minimal attention.

This handsome shrub has outstanding blue-green foliage, delicate 2" flower clusters and brilliant red and yellow fall color. The pea size, purple fruits make fantastic pies and preserves. They were highly esteemed by Native groups and used to improve the flavor of less desirable berries. Not only humans love these fruit - wildlife of all varieties will come for a taste! Strongly recommended for all native plant gardens.

The *Amelanchier alnifolia* (Serviceberry) may also be known as Saskatoon, Shadbush, Shadblow, Indian Pear, Juneberry, Wild Plum, Chuckley Pear or May Cherry. If you're in north country or the Appalachians, you might hear it called the Sarvisberry. *Amelanchier canadensis* is an eastern version of the *a. alnifolia*. Both are understory shrubs or trees and are often found growing in clumps in the wild. They live about 60 years.

Each year they announce their presence in the early springtime when the slender pinkish buds turn to white flowers blooming so profusely that the branches are obscured by their feathery petals. The blooms are reminiscent of the witch hazel. Deciduous, ranging in height to 35 feet and up to 20 feet wide, the Serviceberry begins its annual growth cycle with these flowers even before the leaves sprout in their shades of silver or red which turn to green.

Mature plant in the wild.
Photo by Walter Siegmund



[⇒ More ⇒](#)

At your service, continued



The leaves are downy when they are young and similar to those of cherry cultivars. The mature leaf color is dark green or even a slightly blue tint on top, not glossy, and pale on the underside. They are thicker and more firm in texture than the cherry leaves.

After the blooms fade the fruits appear in the latter part of June or early July, hence another of its common names, the Juneberry. These plentiful red-purple fruit are sweet and juicy, soft in texture and often said to be similar in taste to apples. This is quite natural, as they are a member of the apple family. The fruits are about 15mm diameter with 2 - 5 very small seeds in the pear or apple-like core. They resemble high bush blueberries in size and shape, but they are not related to the blueberry.



One would think the lovely blooms and delicious fruit would be enough of a gift from these trees, but in autumn the oval or oblong shaped leaves, 2-5 inches long and 1-2 inches wide, turn to wondrous shades of yellow-orange to reddish purple before they fall to carpet the ground beneath.

In winter the overall rounded shape of the branches are pleasing to the eye with their gray to black coloration until the new red-brown twigs start the cycle anew come spring. The bark itself is interesting, tightly holding the trunk(s) and branches, it has very distinctive vertical lines. It becomes more scaly as the tree matures.

Photo by Walter Siegmund

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At your service, continued

Found on sloping sides of mountains, moist hillsides, on wide prairies, or along side streams or lakes, the Serviceberry is often seen growing as small trees or shrubs. Thickets of this tree are to be seen almost completely across the depth and breadth of the Americas from the Siskiyou clear north to the Canadian/Alaskan tundra. From Newfoundland to Florida, into Texas and Oklahoma, the Serviceberry is equally at home in New Mexico as it is in New York.

USDA Hardiness Zone: 3-10.

Serviceberry changes form as the growing conditions dictate, forming only shrubs at the edges of it's normal growth range but growing into it's larger tree form where it finds the space and environment.

It likes to follow fence rows and to meander along the edges of woods, and can be found growing peacefully among vine maples, all manner of wild roses and other shrubby plants or small trees. It's companions are often windbreak members or woodland plants. Along the sunny canyons and rocky slopes of the Sierras, it is more creeping in habit instead of it's usual upright shrub form.

Photo by Walter Siegmund



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At your service, continued

The name "saskatoon" came from the Cree inanimate noun misâskwatômina (misâskwatôm sg saskatoonberry, misâskwatômina NI pl saskatoonberries). That nation taught us that the bark can be steeped into a tea for stomach troubles. The bark and twigs were used as tea for recovery after childbirth, and they were combined with other plants for use as a

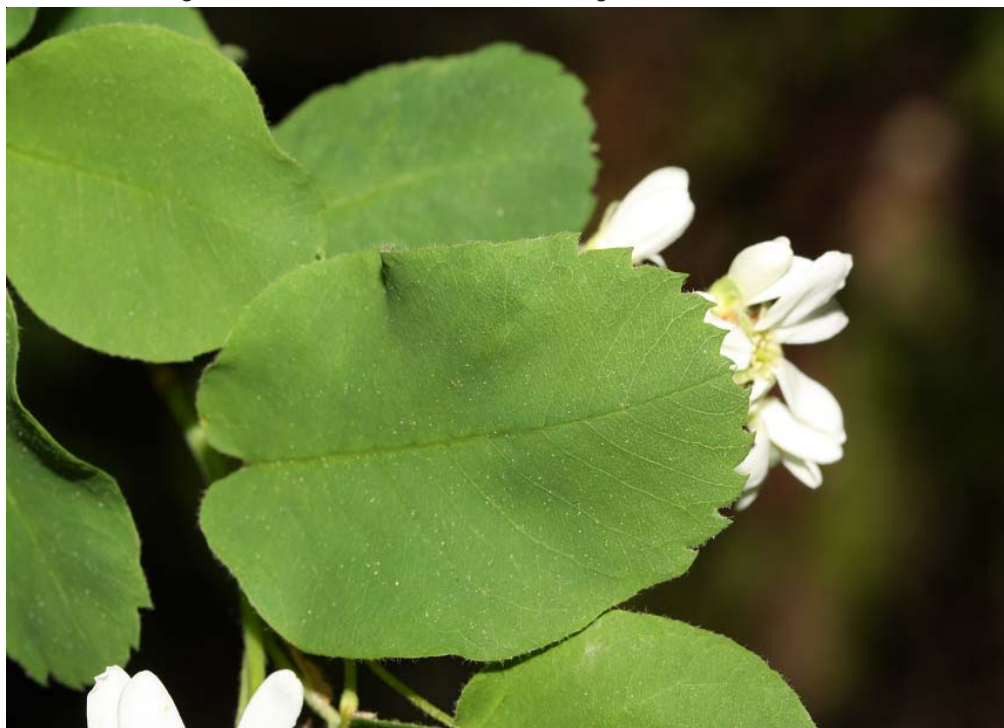


Photo by Walter Siegmund

contraceptive. The tough hard wood proved an excellent material for making arrows, for digging sticks, spear shafts and hanc for tools. Saskatoon sticks w used to spread out salmon f drying, and the branches were used to construct shelters.

Serviceberries are very easy to propagate. Seed is said by some to be the easiest way to obtain new plants, as can be seen by the seedlings that will sprout beneath older trees. You can store the seed but it can be a bit slow to germinate, sometimes taking as long as 18 months. However, the quality of seedling plants cannot be guaranteed. Some will grow true to the parent and some will create a completely new variety.

If you decide to try seeds, you can plant them when fresh and allow them to over-winter in the ground, or you can dry them. Gather ripe berries and place in a small bucket of dry, clean sand. Crush them with your hands while you mix them with the sand. Sift the mix through fine screen to remove larger pieces of fruit. You can then plant the mixture in rows, aiming for 3 seeds per inch.



Germination of seeds planted in this manner will happen in the following spring. Expect a germination rate of less than 50%, and the seedlings will grow about 1 foot per year. Seeds may be the best way to grow a large number of plants, but for the home gardener, we prefer the other methods.

[⇒More⇒](#)

At your service, continued

Easily grown, Serviceberries' very favorite soil is a rich loamy mix, but they will grow in just about any kind of soil as long as good drainage is provided.

If you are growing them for large fruit, by all means give them compost, plenty of water and lots of sun. But if you want more flavor, try to mimic their native habitat of full sun to partial shade and a moderately dry soil.

Drainage is the only critical element when choosing a site for these plants. They are fairly tolerant of lime, and will even do well in heavy clay.

They are very cold-hardy (remember, they do grow up to the edge of the Northern tundra!), and can take temperatures to at least -20°C. Some say they will survive at much lower temperatures. No hothouse babies, these.

The true native *Amelanchier alnifolia* rarely experiences any diseases and the birds and other wildlife generally keep them pest-free. Give them a well-drained soil and they should be healthy enough to withstand most problems.



Photo by Walter Siegmund

While no serious insect or disease problems, but as with most shrubs or small trees there are a few things the average grower of Serviceberries should watch for. These methods of management will work equally well with most native plants.

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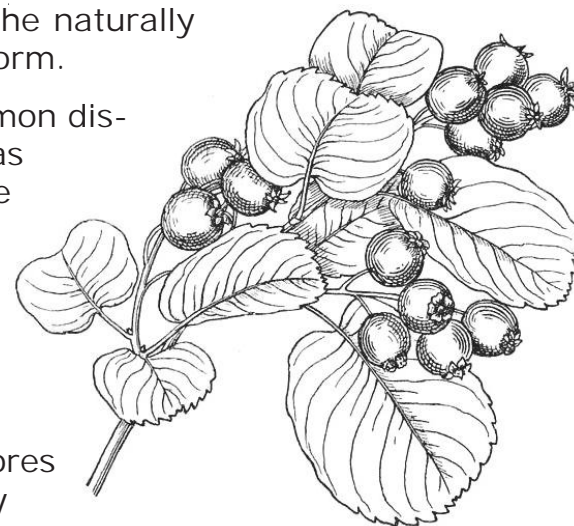
At your service, continued



Fire blight--If the ends of twigs and branches become brown or black, maybe curling over a little, or if cankers which were developed during the previous season begin to seep a cloudy liquid during the damp spring, you may be seeing fire blight. The cause of this disease is *erwinia amylovora*, a disease which can make the plant look bad as well as prohibiting new growth. To treat, prune out any affected branches making sure to cut well below the canker when the plant is dormant. If you discover this problem while the plant is actively growing, but at least a foot below the canker.

Of course, you will want to cut away suckers and water sprouts before they become large and ruin the naturally lovely natural form.

Rust--This common disease will show as brown to orange spots on the leaves. While merely unsightly on the Serviceberry, these spots will spread their spores



to infect any junipers close by. The answer here is not to plant junipers near any shrub or tree that shows a tendency to rust.

[⇒ More ⇒](#)

At your service, continued

In his novel, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, a story of a Native American man's life, James Welch writes:

He wanted sarvisberry soup, but he still didn't know where it had been that he had tasted this soup, or even that it was made of sarvisberries. He only knew that he wanted the taste of something familiar.

It is said that the *Amelanchier alnifolia* or serviceberry was the most important fruit of indigenous peoples in Idaho. They ate the sweet berries fresh from the trees, and picked large quantities of them to dry for use throughout the year. Resembling raisins in appearance when dried individually, they were used to flavor stews, puddings and vegetable dishes. They were mashed and formed into cakes or thin sheets and used as treats. Pemmican was often made of dried berries, dried meat and fat. The Shoshone are said to have made a bread of sunflower seeds, lambs quarter and serviceberries. Cree people routinely used the berries in their Pemmican to cut the fatty taste. The Cree word for the dark purple berries is *mi-sakwato-min*, or "tree of many branches berries."

Native peoples gathered and dried the fruit for winter use, either eaten dried whole or cooked to a jam-like form before being dried into what today is known as "fruit leather." They used the juice to soak roots of other plants to make them more flavourful and sweeter.

Golden fall color



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At your service, continued

Modern taste buds may consider the berries too sweet, but they were prized by early travelers, explorers and miners as a wonderful change to their usual more bland fare.

People all over the world truly love the Serviceberry wherever it's grown. The Saskatchewan, Canada city of Saskatoon was named by early settlers because the site had many saskatoon berry bushes, or trees. In Maryland, Ellicott City chose the Serviceberry as it's official tree for their bicentennial-plus-25 celebration.

Although the origin of the name Amelanchier remains unclear, we do have clues about it's meaning. The species name *alnifolia* means alder-leaved. Since the flowers bloom at the same time that



shad travel the coastal streams to spawn, we see the common name of Shadbush or Shadblow evolved naturally. Other folk tales say that the name "serviceberry" came because the plants bloomed at the same time circuit riding preachers traveled through the mountains, conducting their services and the flowers were traditionally collected to decorate the churches. An Appalachian dialect version is Sarvistree. The Juneberry name began, of course, because the fruit usually begin to ripen in that month.

Whatever you call them, Saskatoon, Serviceberry, Sarvisberry or Juneberry, we just call these native berries a most delicious gift from a delightful tree.



Fruit not yet ripe

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At your service, continued

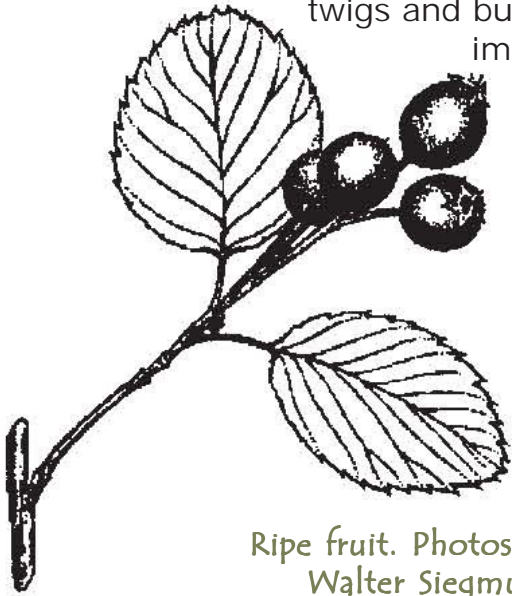
A wonderful landscape plant, the flowers, foliage and bark are attractive year-round. Not invasive, the Serviceberry can be planted without fear in beds with other shrubs or trees or as specimen plants.

Very resistant to air pollution, they can be grown with a single trunk or a multiple-trunk grove. They make an excellent windbreak when planted fairly close together so the branches can intertwine to form a living fence.

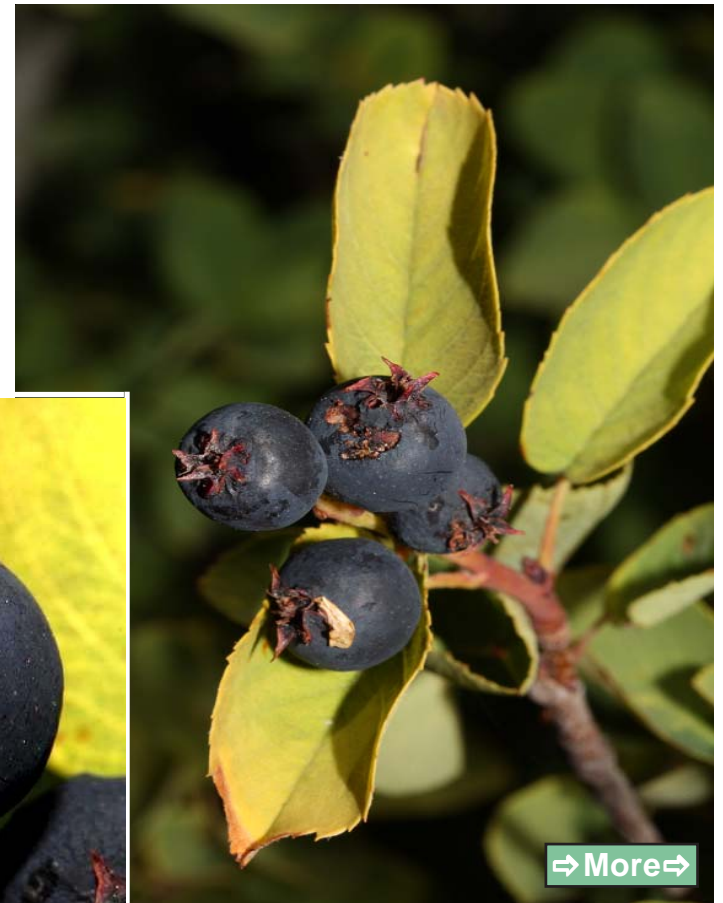
Economically the wood of the Serviceberry is occasionally made into tool handles, but it's most common contribution to humans and wildlife are the delicious berries.

Serviceberries are eaten by numerous bird species, including pheasant, grouse, mockingbirds, northern flicker, blue jay, American crow, cardinals, cedar waxwings, towhees, American redstart, gray catbird, American robin, varieties of thrush, Baltimore orioles, and many others. Birds love them when they are fattening up for their fall migration.

Squirrels, chipmunks, fox, coyotes, rabbits and deer browse its stems, twigs and buds. The spring pollen and nectar are an important source for bees and other insects.



Ripe fruit. Photos by
Walter Siegmund



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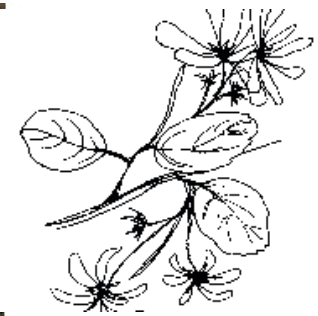
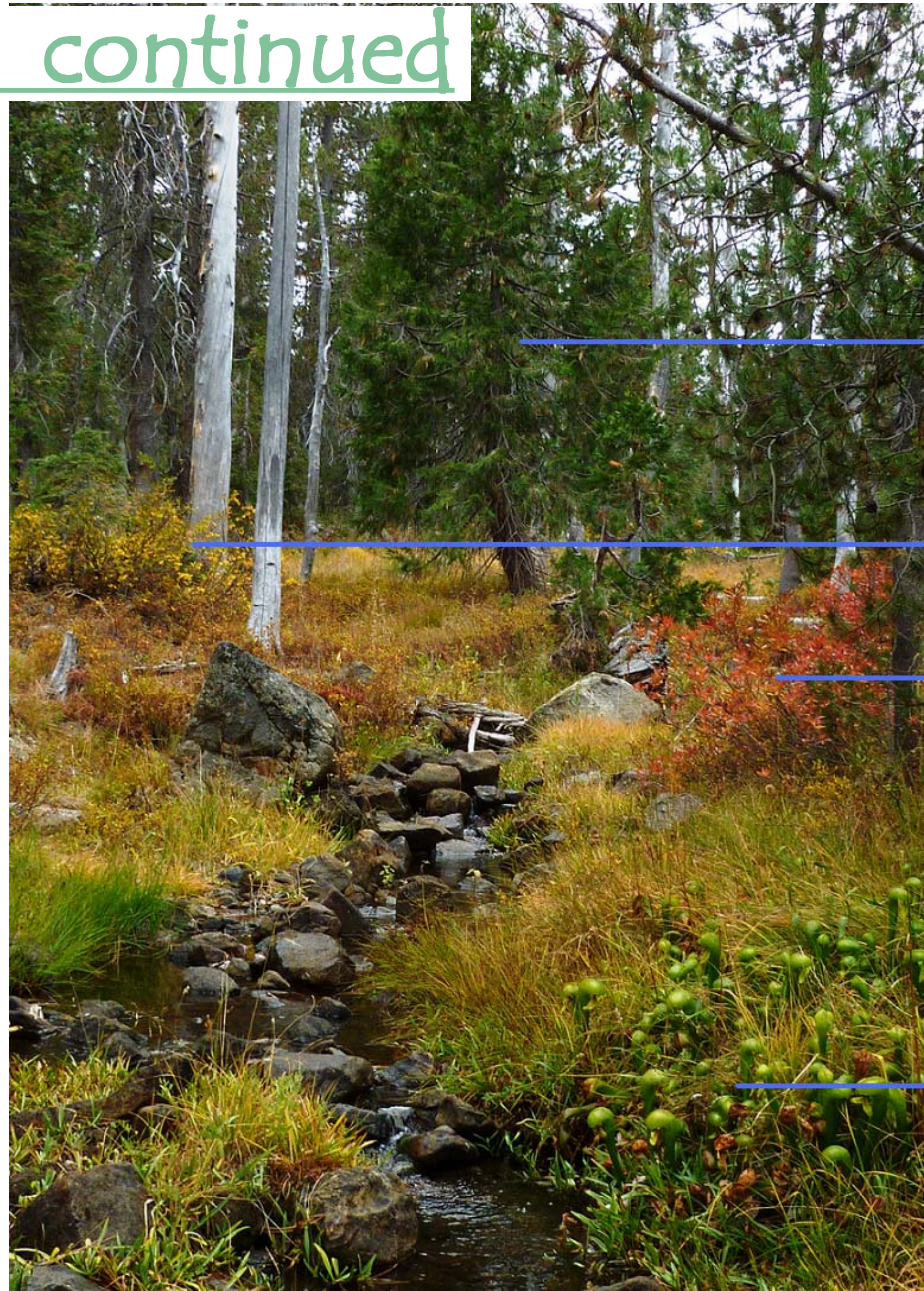
At your service, continued

Very few people will not enjoy eating the luscious fruits fresh from the plant, but they are equally delightful when cooked, frozen, dried or made into wine.

A very nice quick and easy desert can be done by combining berries with ice cream or whipped cream. You can mash the berries and add a little sugar if desired to make a delicious sauce for ice cream or pancakes. Jams, jellies, muffins, fruit leather, all these and more can be made from these very palatable berries. Tea or beverage flavorings are other ways they can be used.

Although completely different than the Huckleberry species, Serviceberries can be substituted freely for Hucks or blueberries whenever those are called for in recipes. You may want to use less sugar if your particular fruits are overly sweet.

See recipes using this delicious fruit on our website at http://www.nwplants.com/business/catalog/ame_aln.html.



Calocedrus decurrens

Amelanchier alnifolia

Rhododendron occidentale

Darlingtonia californica

Gumboot Creek,
Siskiyou County,
California in October
Photo by Julie Nelson for
US Dept of Agriculture



Weed alert

These early spring weeds are already up here in Oregon's Willamette Valley.

Cardamine hirsuta: common names are Shot Weed, Hairy Bittercress, lamb's cress, land cress, hoary bitter cress, spring cress, flick weed, (or lambscress, landcress, hoary bittercress, springcress, flickweed, and shotweed)



Native to Europe and Asia, this plant is now present in North America. It is edible though clearly bitter, a member of the mustard family (Brassicaceae).

From early Spring to Autumn, an appealing small rosette of leaves appears wherever it can get a foothold--even in cracks on sidewalks and driveways. Once the rosette is fully formed (this takes only a few days), slender stalks rise up and are topped with small white flowers. In just a day or two, seed pods replace the flowers. They are small and extremely efficient at their task of dispersing the seeds. Indeed, the slightest touch is rewarded by seeds pommeling everything within a range of about 8 - 10 inches or more.

This plant delights in damp, recently disturbed soil such as is common in nursery or garden center plants, and hairy bittercress seeds may be introduced with those plants. In the interest of self-preservation it behooves us to carefully sanitize plants we bring into our gardens.

It is the explosion of seeds that prompted me to call this plant "Shoot your eye out." The phrase is from the movie, A Christmas Story, a story of young Ralphie who wants Santa to bring him a bb gun but is warned at each mention that if he had a bb gun it would shoot his eyes out. If you peer too closely to the plant, it is very likely those seeds will get in your eyes.

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Weed alert, continued

Galium aparine: common names are Cleavers, Catchweed, Bedstraw, Goosegrass, Stickywilly, Clivers, Robin-run-the-hedge, cleaverwort, scarthgrass, white hedge and Grip Grass. An herbaceous annual plant which slithers along the ground and climbs up anything that grows erect such as trees, cars, buildings, I am unaware of any length to which this thing will not go in conquering the landscape. The boxy stems are circled by leaves every few inches. Those lance shaped leaves covered with whitish hooked hairs, very sticky, will paste themselves on stockings, trousers, etc. The flowers by themselves are lovely but the host they grow from and the ensuing seed pods make this plant virtually the most single-minded species the world over (or at least our continent). The plant's design is a marvelous thing-- genius! in fact. Each part is quite elegant. The goal is to bear fruit and multiply. The seed pods attached to clothing can live through numerous washings. Cats and dogs often get the burrs in their fur where they will work themselves to the skin.

There have been some uses found through the centuries for this plant. The fruits have been dried and roasted, then used as a coffee substitute. Medicinally used as a diuretic, lymphatic, and detoxifier. Poultices and washes were used to treat skin ailments, light wounds and burns. The pulp was used to relieve poisonous bites and stings. To make a poultice, the entire plant is used, and applied directly to the affected area. Ancient Greek shepherds used the barbed stems to make a "rough sieve", which could be used to strain milk. In Europe, the dried, matted foliage of the plant was once used to stuff mattresses. The clinging hairs cause the branches to stick together, which enabled the mattress filling to maintain a uniform thickness. The roots of cleavers can be used to make a permanent red dye. The sap of the plant can cause contact dermatitis in sensitive people.



Photo by Mike Pennington

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Weed alert, continued

Geranium robertianum, common names are Herb Robert, Red Robin, Death Come Quickly, Storksbill, Dove's Foot, Crow's Foot, or (in North America) Robert Geranium, is a common species of cranesbill on many continents. It grows as an annual or biennial, with perky little pink flowers from spring through autumn. The ferny leaves are usually tinged with red, the stems are usually red as well. The peppery fragrance is typical of most cranesbills. Fortunately the roots are simple, shallow and not strong. That's a good thing because this plant can spread itself to cover a large area in short order. In the state of Washington, it is known as Stinky Bob and classified as a noxious weed.

Medicinally used for toothache and nosebleeds. Freshly picked leaves can be rubbed on the body to repel mosquitoes. It was carried to attract good luck, and due to its analogical association with storks, to enhance fertility.

Don't be fooled by the pixy-like blooms and fancy leaves--this plant is incredibly quick at covering ground. Please do not compost--one escaped seed can start a whole colony.

This plant proves the argument of mulching bare areas of the garden. While determined dandelions, alien blackberries and ivy are heavy hitters that require a deep covering of mulch, this geranium can be deterred with only a couple of inches.

Photo by Sannse

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Weed alert, continued

Taraxacum officinale, the common dandelion, is a flowering herbaceous perennial plant known by most everyone. It grows wherever it has a chance in lawns, on roadsides, on disturbed banks and shores of water ways, and other areas with moist soils. It is sometimes used as a medical herb and in food preparation. A very common plant easily identified by the yellow flowers, round balls of fluffy seeds and a rosette of leaves that are said to resemble the teeth of lions.

In springtime, the leaves come first followed quickly by flowers which turn into seed heads in no time at all. Early eradication is key. Once those seeds let fly, there is no stopping rapid reproduction.

A tip: If you cannot pull up the whole plants, keeping the flowers well picked will keep the spreading within bounds.



Photo by Adam Retchless

There is a type of tool that works very well at pulling up the whole taproot of Dandelions and other plants such as Hawksbeard or Chickory. Just place the sharp points over the weed, step down on the pedal and then pull up. A lever by the handle will clear the points for the next stab. Example at right.



Photos by Greg Hume



This & That

Notes from Jennifer

As spring approaches the Willamette Valley, she has not been stingy with sunshine or rain, a blizzard deeper than we ever see, and has even tossed in some strict winds as punctuation. These same qualities in autumn seem diametrically opposed to the current offerings. I think it's the very air that surrounds us in spring that makes all the difference. As I walk through my garden, it feels soft. There is no sense of hurrying, of rashness. It is a gentle time with little tingles of surprise peeping through the Rhodies, their branches tipped by fat buds awaiting their time to open. Perennials planted in years past are waking from winter slumber. I think they blink a few times when they break through the soil to bright sunshine.



Under ordinary conditions, I use any excuse to get outside to meet nature face to face. But this year, not much is ordinary in my world. The garden is beaming, each year it grows more lush, more luxurious. It is getting used to very little watering beyond what falls out of the sky--very different from what it was dealt under the original gardener's regime, she planted it all and babied it continuously. It was a well manicured show piece from its inception in 1979, 35 years ago. I am a natural organic kind of gardener, coming to this garden almost three years ago.

A small percentage of shrubs and perennials did not make it through the past two years of natural drought, but most did. The first year they were missing that gardener-supplied summer watering. They whined and complained when we had no rain for weeks and temperatures were above 90 degrees. I did give in and watered as little as possible, after all these plants had many years of pampering. Then last year I watered only once or twice overall but I did give new plants a drink often. After all, they could not be expected to put down enough roots in only a few months. This year, I plan to water the established plants minimally.

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This & That, continued

No, the garden was fine this year. It was the technical side of things that went belly up for me. My main laptop (whom I call Cisco) dropped dead. The backup laptop, Pancho, insisted on showing the "blue screen of death" as we computer geeks call it and refused to go any further. And the little netbook (Vivienne) I use for writing

wherever I go, simply flatlined. I was computer-less for 1 1/2 months until my go-to experts could order parts and get everybody up and running. I have a brand new Cisco now, it's all naked and waiting for attention. It will take another month or so before I can set it up completely. Until then I'm on the restored Pancho. Vivienne is waiting for her turn, she's very patient.



A little madness in the Spring
Is wholesome even for the King,
But God be with the Clown —
Who ponders this tremendous scene —
This whole Experiment of Green —
As if it were his own!

Emily Dickinson

Until next time,
Jennifer

