

Volume 4, Issue 2, 2006

April 2006

# Northwest Native Plant Journal

A Bi-Monthly Web Magazine

(formerly NW Native Plant Newsletter)

Reminder:  
April 22 is  
Earth Day!

## Unusual! Strange! Intriguing!

A new way to look at NW Native Plants

## When is a native more than a native?

## Fresh new photos!

Published by The Wild Garden: Hansen's Northwest Native Plant Database

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## A Bi-Monthly Web Magazine

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# About this Web Magazine

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.

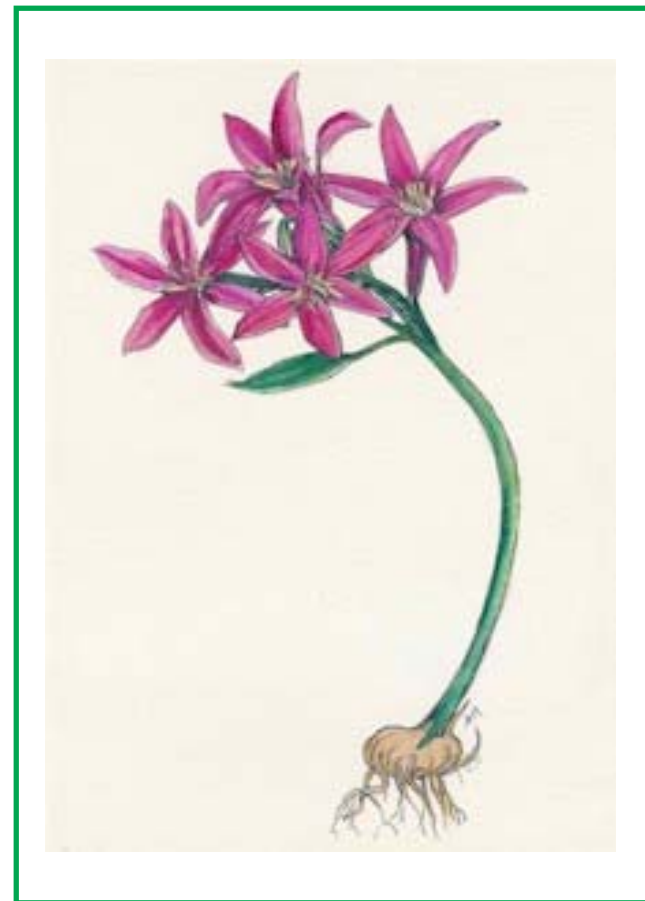
**B** — To help you create your own Native Plant Gardens, large or small, for home or work.

**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.).

This issue of our Journal is dedicated to the unusual, the odd, the mysterious and even bizarre faces of Northwest native plants. Though our plants have been here long before man first arrived, they are anything but ordinary. We've found some fine examples of truly unusual native plants and ways they may be used to turn the plain into the fanciful. Hope you enjoy it.



Field Cluster Lily  
(*Brodiaea congesta*)  
Heidi D. Hansen Watercolor





# On the Cover

## Red-Flowering Currant (*Ribes sanguineum*)



Photo by JoAnn Onstott

This is one of the best photograph of Northwest Native plants in the nursery that JoAnn has taken so far. She's totally captured the romance of this Northwest Native Shrub without sacrificing any of the clarity of the plant. The blooms are so luscious you want to reach out and touch them.

Red-Flowering Currant is one of those native shrubs that present beauty to the landscape year-round. The leaves are ruffly and densely green as they emerge, growing into fine looking shape. They are closely followed by ample sprays of pink to red blooms that don't stint on color. After the flowers have gone by, this tall-growing shrub provides a lovely background for shorter shrubs and perennials. In autumn, the leaves give great color before falling to the ground where, because of their smaller size, they can be left as mulch.

Wally says of this plant:

*"One of the best natives for your garden, it requires little care but is reliably beautiful. I highly recommend this shrub."*



# Rare plant puzzle



Photo © Donald C. Eastman

## Name this plant!

A clue to help you on your quest for the correct answer:

"I'm rare and unusual to see. The person who identified me in the 1970's gave me his name. It's misleading because I'm very clean!"

Send me an email with the correct botanical name of this plant . A small prize to those who correctly identify by April 10, 2006.

Good luck!  
*Wally*

## Answer to last Journal's puzzle:

**Salix arctica**  
**(Arctic Willow)**

**Congratulations to all who correctly answered!**



# To Do List

## Caring for your NW Native Plant Garden

**1** – Watch for Rusts & Black Spots on leaves. Northwest Native Plants are less disease prone than most plants, but some disease can occur. April is usually cool and wet and some plants may develop rusts or black spots. These are usually not fatal. Sprays are available if you wish to use them. Bayleton is a good spray for rusts and spots on Madrone, Hairy Manzanita, Incense Cedar, Serviceberry, Hawthorn and others. Also try sprays found in most garden stores labeled for domestic roses.

**2** – Plan now for seed collection. Note locations carefully and then revisit the sites as seed starts to ripen. Remember to collect only a small part of native seed, leaving most for nature to handle.

**3** – There is always variation in native plants. You might see a Ceanothus (wild lilac) that has a special form or color. Remember this plant for cuttings as cuttings clone the mother plant - seed does not.

**4** – Do not over-fertilize native plants. If you have the time, use liquid fertilizer such as Miracle Grow or similar (no danger of burning the plant). Note - Most Northwest plants like acid soil - typical Ph 5 - 6.

**5** – You can still divide some perennials and ferns. Must have a crown and root!

**6** – Watch for slugs during wet periods - they love Wild Ginger!

**7** – Plant bare root plants now! Get a boost to your garden with healthy plants at low prices. It's a great time to plant.





# Sparky's Corner

## A special message from our frisky contributor



Sometimes you just never know what a day will bring.

If you remember, last time Wally let me write for his Journal I was trying to find out just what kind of a squirrel I am. My mom was not sure and Grandma was talking about living in the east and what it was like to live there. As it turns out, Grandma thinks the whole continent is the Willamette Valley. And we discovered Grandma makes up stories when she doesn't remember what happened when she was a kid. She doesn't say they're stories either, she just tells them to my brothers and sisters and me. They change around, depending on what she calls "the moral of the story." Guess that's how folks get to be after they've seen a bit of life (when they get older). Her favorite writer is Mark Twain if that's a clue.

Anyway, we got some more letters from gardeners about my dilemma. My favorite was from somebody in Washington who is just about positive I'm a Chickaree or Pine Squirrel and totally native to the Northwest. They said this kind of squirrel is smaller and much more active than other squirrels and much cuter. That's good enough for me! I betcha that's what I am. Small and active and cute! They sent a link to the National Geographic website where there is a picture of a Pine Squirrel, also called Douglas's Squirrel and the real (secret) name is *Tamiasciurus douglasii*. The picture sure does look like me so maybe that's what I am. Except it also says Chickaree's are noisier than most squirrels, which I maybe admit to being. Maybe.

If it's true, then we've been here in the northwest for centuries! The first official writing about Chickarees was done by the Corps of Discovery when they came out here with Lewis and Clark back in 1806. Bet Grandma doesn't know that.

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# Sparky's Corner, continued

I feel better now that I may not be an alien after all. I might be, but maybe not. I sure don't feel like an alien. In fact, I feel just right here in the nursery with all my pals and the plants and those friendly two-leggers. We have birds and butterflies too. And last year we had Cooper's Hawks! My friends and I were pretty surprised when they showed up and built a nest right here in the nursery but they were nice and boy can they ever fly! Sure wish I could fly like that. I can jump really well but mom says I'd better leave the flying to the ones with feathers.

If you'd like to look at the National Geographic website that nice gardener wrote about, go to [http://www.nationalgeographic.com/lewisandclark/record\\_species\\_183\\_5.html](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/lewisandclark/record_species_183_5.html).

Well, see you next time.

*(Maybe native)  
Sparky*



A new picture of me! JoAnn, who takes photos for the nursery, was out the other day and saw me up in this tree. I wasn't sure what she was up to but then I saw the camera and I sat very still so she'd get a good shot. Pretty cool, huh! Good job, JoAnn!





# Shaping Nature



Rock covered cottage surrounded by topiary spirals and spheres and obelisks. Too much of a good thing? Definitely a statement of style.

## Topiary!

The art of topiary is ancient. So old, in fact, that letters about the gardens of Pliny the Younger (AD 62-110) in his villa in Tuscany describe it as being

*“embellished by various figures, and grounded with a box hedge, from which you descend by an easy slope, adorned with the representation of diverse animals in box, answering alternately to each other: this is surrounded by a walk enclosed with tonsile evergreens shaped into a variety of forms. Behind it is the Gestatio laid out in the form of a circus, ornamental in the middle with box, cut into numberless different figures, together with a plantation of shrubs prevented by the shears from running too high; the whole is fenced in by a wall, covered with box, rising in differing ranges to the top.”*

The writer adds,

*“...the box is cut into a thousand different forms: sometimes into letters expressing the name of the master: sometimes that of the artificer: whilst here and there little obelisks rise intermixed alternately with fruit trees...”*

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# Shaping Nature, continued

The fantastic shapes thus described were formed using plants that are closely related to those that are native to the Northwest: Box, yew, myrtle and arborvitae. Other plants common to topiary art are privet, holly and laurel. The same plants that were turned into topiary centuries ago are still the favored choices for today's topiary artists.

Topiary gardens are found the world over in as many styles as the artists who clip them can imagine. A few notable examples:

--The Samban-Lei Sekpil in Manipur, India is the world's tallest topiary according to Guinness Book of World Records.

--Levens Hall and Topiary Gardens in Cumbria, England began in the late 17th century by M. Beaumont who laid out the gardens of Hampton Court in Herefordshire, a former royal palace in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

--The Drummond Castle Gardens are said to be the finest in Scotland.

--Portmeirion in Snowdonia, Wales, is designed in a more mediterranean style and has been used as location for films and television shows.

--The Villa Lante in Bagnaia, Italy, is one of the most famous of Italian gardens dating back to the 16th century.



Classic knot garden. Intricate detail in formal pattern invites a stroll on a spring day.

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# Shaping Nature, continued



In the United States, we have been favored by many dedicated gardeners. One of the most notable is the Ladew Topiary Gardens established by Harvey Ladew in the late 1930's.

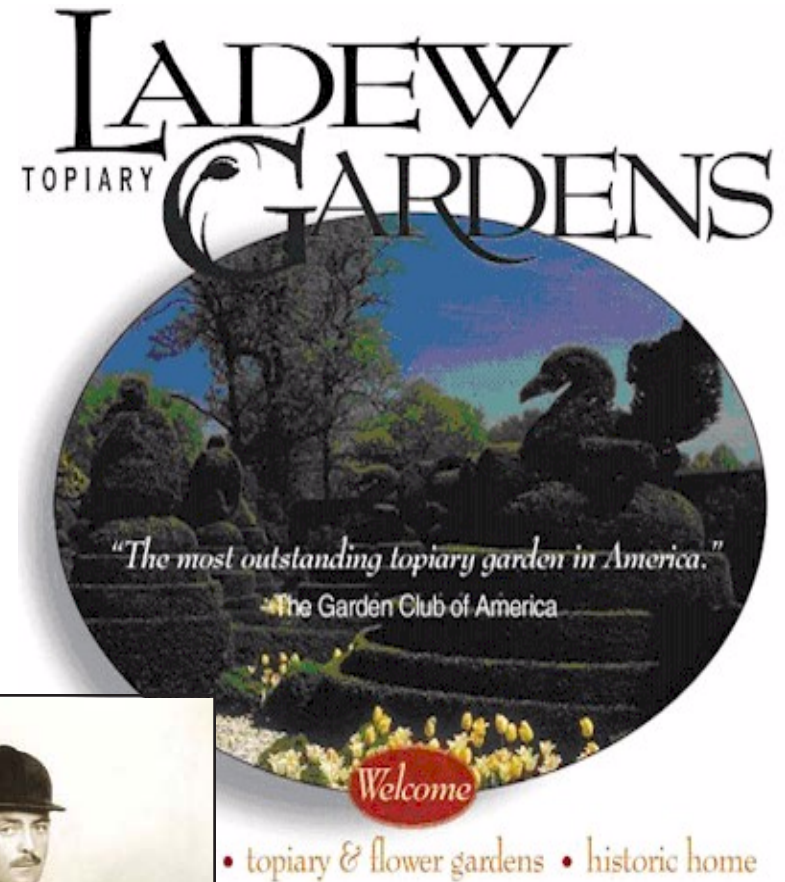
Located between Baltimore, Maryland and the Pennsylvania border, Ladew's creation of a hunt,

horses, riders, dogs and the fox clearing a well-clipped hedge is probably the most famous single piece of topiary on this continent.

Wrote Mr. Ladew, *"Today I clipped several miles of hedges for the exercise and pleasure."*

Obviously he enjoyed this work, as such artistry could never be attained by someone who did not truly love it.

Styling plants into exact shapes for hedges is still in fashion. The photo above shows a part of the Box hedge that enhances the view of the front of our Oregon State Capitol building.



The Official Web Site of Ladew Topiary Gardens © 2000  
Robert Noonan Photography © 2000 All Rights Reserved: Erik Kvistvik Photography © 2000

Harvey Ladew in hunting costume  
and the opening page of the  
garden's web site,  
[www.ladewgardens.com](http://www.ladewgardens.com)

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# Shaping Nature, continued

**What exactly is “topiary?”** According to Wikipedia, an online dictionary and encyclopedia,

*“Topiary is the art of creating sculptures in the medium of clipped shrubs and sub-shrubs. The word derives from the Latin word for an ornamental landscape gardener, topiarius.”*

Long ago, topiary work was done purely by clipping and training the subject plant until it conformed to the desired shape. Today’s topiary artists commonly use forms as the basis of their creations.

It may sound a bit like bonsai, but the difference between topiary and bonsai is great, most easily described by the scale. Topiary usually aims for life-size or larger. Bonsai is more a miniature that appears to be life-size. Bonsai is highly structured with each shape and element carrying a significant meaning. Topiary is the imagination of the artist expressed in plant material.



Example of a parterre, a formal garden style which had its start in the 16-th century knot gardens.  
This piece of artwork is titled “Kensington Palace” and was engraved by Jan Kip for Britannia Illustrata, 1707/8

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# Shaping Nature, continued

After the times of Pliny the Younger, the Roman Empire spread across the continent and before long there were gardens formally decorated with box shapes in imitation of those left behind.



During the Renaissance, gardens were classical in design favoring box parterres and clipped hedges and of course, typical topiary work. One villa in Florence created at this time gave evidence of this passion, including “spheres, porticoes, temples, vases, urns, apes, donkeys, oxen, a bear, giants, men and women, warriors, a witch, philosophers, popes and cardinals.”

After the revolution of 1688, William of Orange came from Holland and ignited the craze for topiary to legendary heights. He began the addition to traditional English gardens to be known in later times as “Topiary’s Golden Age.”

Horace Walpole wrote that “giants, animals, monsters, coats of arms, and mottoes in Yew, Box and Holly” were everywhere. He noted that “Gods, animals and other objects were no longer carved out of stone: but the trees, shrubs and hedges were made to do double service as a body of verdure and as a sculpture gallery.”



Animals have been favored as topiary subjects for centuries. The modern bunny is quite simple when compared with the sophisticated cats with tails entwined.

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# Shaping Nature, continued

Not long after, Alexander Pope wrote an essay in *The Guardian* titled *Verdant Sculpture* and stated, “We seem to make it our study to recede from nature, not only in various tonsure of greens into the most regular and formal shapes but even in monstrous attempts beyond the reach of the art itself. We run into sculpture and are yet better pleased to have our trees in the awkward figures of men and animals than in the most regular of their own.”

It didn’t take long until the fabulous and flamboyant topiaries were ripped out and burned, replaced by more pastoral landscapes focusing on lakes and groupings of trees and shrubs in imitation of nature.

In the 19th century, gardens again grew into more formal styles reminiscent of Italian palaces and of course this included topiary. Though for the most part the style never reached the almost hysteria of the earlier centuries. The topiary work was more tame and shapely rather than fantastically designed. The lovers of “wild gardens” continue to rebuke the unnatural designs but still we see topiary artists in almost every neighborhood and certainly in most parks and public gardens.

Beautiful composition of spiral atop a sphere covering the container in this public garden.

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# Shaping Nature, continued



Parterre with knot garden of Box and Lavendar.

Chateau Villandry garden, Loire Valley, 2004

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# Shaping Nature, continued

**How do you make a topiary?** Well, first you get a plant.

The Oregon Box (*Pachistima myrsitines*), also known as Mountain Lover and Myrtle Boxwood, is a low evergreen native shrub growing to about 3 feet that can be shaped quite readily into a number of traditional topiaries. Since it is a low growing plant it makes a wonderful low hedge for knot gardens or parterres and it can be trained on topiary forms into just about any shape you can think of. It's perfect for patio topiaries or table-top creations. It is very drought resistant and requires little care (except shaping!). A delightful bonus are the tiny red flowers which look quite lovely in topiaries.

Another appropriate choice for topiary work is the Pacific Wax Myrtle (*Myrica californica*). It is taller than the Box, reaching 15 feet but just as densely leafed. It also has small flowers which are followed by purple nut-like fruits attractive to birds. Very hardy and tolerant of poor soil, it grows in full sun or shade.

The Western or Pacific Yew (*Taxus brevifolia*) is a small, evergreen tree that can grow to 50 feet if left to it's own devices. A traditional choice for topiary, the Yew sports vibrant red berries which are loved by birds (but are extremely poisonous to humans!). The closely spaced needles make it a naturally perfect topiary specimen.

**This young Box is a good size to begin topiary work.**  
Photo by JoAnn Onstott



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# Shaping Nature, continued

Our last native choice for topiary gardening is the Giant Arborvitae, also known as Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*). This is the tree you'll want for your big creations: it can grow to 180 feet! Sturdy and thickly covered with foliage, the Giant Arborvitae will stand up to the most demanding of large spirals or animals or castle towers you may want to embark on once you get the topiary fever.

When selecting your plant, think of the shape you are aiming for. Every shrub and tree has its own personality, so stand back and imagine how the design will fit. If you're going for a sphere, the bottom branches aren't important since you'll trim them off anyway. But the higher branches should be particularly thick. If you favor a spiral, picture how the branches will flow in this design. In other words, let nature give you a hand and choose a plant that already shows a tendency of conforming to your vision.



A Giant Arborvitae formal hedge.

Next, pick your location. As they say in the real estate field, location is everything. Keep in mind where you want to display this creation. You may want to do your first trimming while your plant is still in its nursery pot just in case something goes seriously awry with the shears. If you're planting in the ground, select a spot that your plant will like. For instance, don't put a Box in a totally shady spot or where the ground never dries out. You want a happy and healthy plant that will live for many years.



Yew "needles" are soft and plentiful.

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# Shaping Nature, continued

If you're going for a potted plant, choose a pot that will compliment your topiary. Bear in mind the growth you'll see in the next 2-3 years. A big plant in a little pot won't get the water it needs without a lot of tending and it will look silly. Likewise a little plant will swim in a big pot and will appear lost.

The style of the pot should be in tune with your topiary style also. These plain pots below at left are perfect for the geometric shapes of the topiaries. An urn-shaped pot with some embellishment looks lovely with a sphere shaped topiary. All of these plants can grow for a long time before they outgrow their pots.



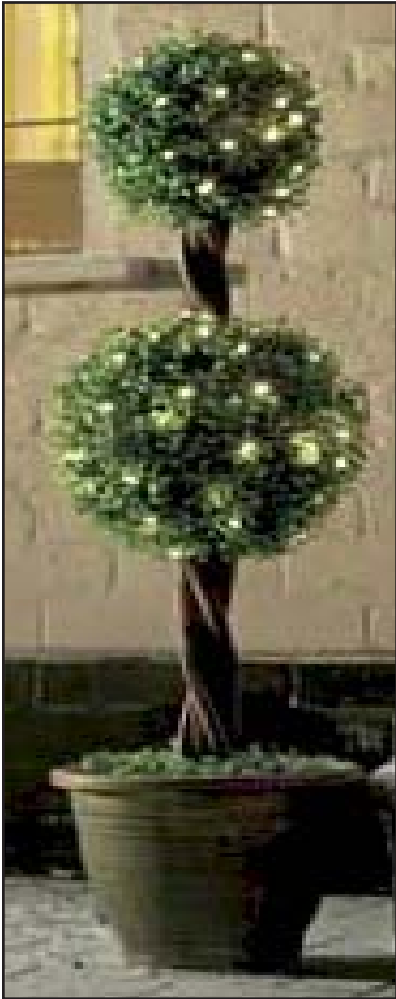
Of course, keeping a plant confined in a pot for years will require some feeding since the roots can't grow out to get their own nutrients. A good way to replenish the food source for potted plants is to simply remove the top few inches of soil once or twice a year and replace it with some good compost. Another way to feed your potted plants is with compost tea, easy to make and easy to use--just don't get it on the leaves!

**Now that you've picked the plant and the location, what's next?** A trip to the library would be a good thing about now. There are lots of books with illustrations and exact instructions on topiary art. You can find inspiration as well as all those professional tricks that will help you make your topiary a success.



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# Shaping Nature, continued



Another wonderful way to learn topiary art is online. There is a website that gives a complete online course in this intriguing art right at your fingertips and it is free! Here's what the website says about the course:

"This course is designed to empower you with all the necessary background knowledge, skill and confidence to create your own topiary. All the essential information and resources will be made available to you on-line.

"It is estimated that it will require about 150 - 300 hours working at your own pace to complete, and will cover the following main areas:

1. Introduction to Topiary
2. History of Topiary
3. Garden Design
4. Planting Materials
5. Traditional Topiary
6. Frame Making - Design, Construction, Materials
7. Topiary Shapes
8. Care, Maintenance, and Safety
9. Resources (local and worldwide)
10. Online Chat with the gardener

OPTIONAL:

11. Garden Tours - You'll have a chance to visit selected topiary gardens and meet the head gardener of some of the worlds famous gardens which will also include onsite workshops.
12. Garden Photography
13. Garden Portrait Painting

"Prerequisites - The love for gardening and the desire to learn more about topiary."

This box is very old but in excellent health. Note the twined main trunks. Lovely choice of pot and decorated for evening to boot!

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# Shaping Nature, continued

About the tutor for this online topiary course:

“Chris Crowder, your course tutor, is the Head Gardener at Levens Hall in England, the site of one of the oldest and most extensive topiary gardens in the world. He has lead the team responsible for its maintenance and development for over a decade. Before that, he worked and studied at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. A writer, lecturer and broadcaster on gardening in general, and topiary in particular, he is the ideal, inspirational guide to this most intriguing subject.”

The website is located at [www.topiaryart.com](http://www.topiaryart.com).

What a delightful thing to do: offer this wealth of knowledge and experience at no cost to anyone who wants to learn. To my mind, that's the mark of a true artist. Sharing one's love of working with plants in such a unique way is remarkable, admirable and noble.



In this old photo, the horse and rider jump a living fence of Boxwood shaped in zig-zag pattern.



**Topiary is not meant to be a natural plant form.  
Rather, it's a whimsy using natural materials.**

**It can be great fun--try it!**

Two photos from the website [www.topiaryart.com](http://www.topiaryart.com) of Levens Hall and Gardens. Says the author: "It is the best, oldest and most extensive topiary garden in the world."



# Wondrous Works of Nature

Surprising and sometimes peculiar, these Northwest Native Plants are most unusual.

Photographs by Donald C. Eastman

Prickly Poppy (*Argemone munita* Dur. & Hig. *ssp. rotundata* [Rydb.] G. Ownbey)

Poppy Family (*Papaveraceae*)

This plant, considered to be rare and threatened in Oregon, is known from the Alvord Desert region east of Steen's Mountain. It is more commonly found in the Great Basin areas to the south. It prefers dry, disturbed areas of pebbly or sandy soils.

*Argemone munita* *ss. rotundata* is a large plant, growing to forty inches tall. It has six large white papery-like petals, from one inch to one and one-half inches long, surrounding a large, dense center of yellow stamens. There are numerous sharp spines on the stems and leaves. It blooms from June to August.

Photo © Donald C. Eastman



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# Wondrous Works of Nature, continued

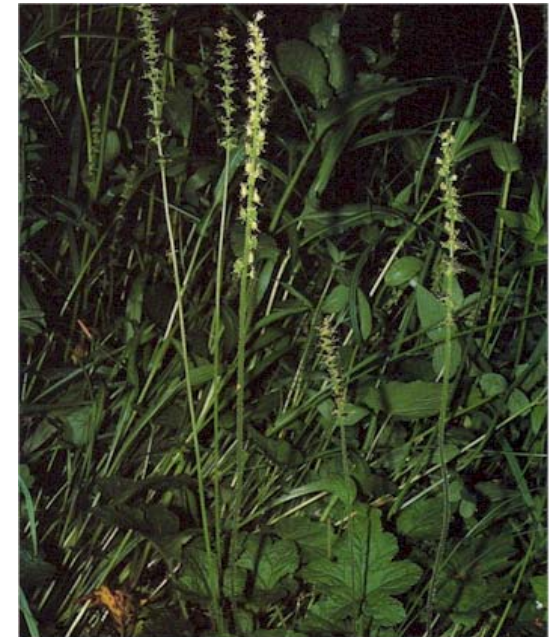


*Bensonia* (*Bensoniella oregana* [Abr. and Bacig.] Morton)

Saxifrage Family (*Saxifragaceae*)

This species, found in the Siskiyou Mountains of southwest Oregon and in Humboldt County in California, is considered to be limited in abundance throughout its range but currently stable. It prefers wet meadows and moist streamside sites in Pre-Cretaceous metasedimentary rock at elevations above 4000 feet.

*Bensonia oregana* can be identified by its leaf shape which is broad and ovate, five to nine lobed, two to three inches long, and generally smooth and hairless. It is attached by a light green petiole, which has numerous long, white shaggy hairs. The stems, also very hairy, grow to fourteen inches tall. The small white sepals and petals are only about one sixteenth to one-eighth of an inch long, and the light green seeds forming in the hypanthium turn black toward maturity. It blooms in June and July.



Photos © Donald C. Eastman

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# Wondrous Works of Nature, continued

Oregon Grape-Fern or Pumice Grape-Fern (*Botrychium pumicola* Cov. in Underw.)

Adder's-tongue Family (*Ophioglossaceae*)

One of the rarest of grape-ferns, it has been found only in pumice high on the volcanic peaks of Crater Lake, the Paulina Mountains, and Broken Top, in Oregon and on Mt. Shasta in California. It is endangered throughout its range in both Oregon and California.

The stem of *Botrychium pumicola* is stout, grayish-green, about four to nine inches tall. It has both a sterile frond (leaf) and a fertile one. The sterile frond is erect, sessile, leathery, and about one to one and one-half inches long, having a glaucous or powdery-like surface appearance. It is usually tenately divided, each of the three sections pinnately sectioned into roundish segments. The fertile frond, taller than the sterile, is pinnately branched and carries the spore-bearing sporangia. They appear round and yellowish in color and contain a copious number of spores. The fertile frond is present from July to September.

Photo © Donald C. Eastman

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# Wondrous Works of Nature, continued



Photo © Donald C. Eastman

**Bristle-Flowered Collomia**  
(*Collomia macrocalyx* Leib. ex Brand.)

**Phlox Family (*Polemoniaceae*)**

This is a plant known only from eastern Oregon where it grows in dry, rocky, undisturbed areas. With very few widely-separated populations still in existence, it is considered to be very rare but presently stable.

*Collomia macrocalyx* grows about four inches tall. Its foliage is covered with fine, white hairs, but it is not glandular. The principal leaves are clustered near the inflorescence. They are linear to lanceolate in shape, roughish, about an inch long, dilated and lighter colored near the base. The calyx is about four-tenths of an inch long with narrow and sharply-tipped sepals that are unequal in length. The funnel-shaped, five-lobed corolla is purple, turning to white in the throat. It blooms from late May to early June.

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# Wondrous Works of Nature, continued



Ripened fruits

## Black Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum* L.)

This is our only species, and genus, of the Crowberry Family (*Empetraceae*) in Oregon. A semi-shrub, it grows on moist rock and bluffs along the Oregon coast from Lane County south into California. It is also found on Mt. Rainier in Washington, and across the far north around the world, also in South America.

*Empetrum nigrum* is recognized by its prostrate, mat-forming stems which are several feet in length. It has dark green, linear, shiny evergreen leaves that are from one-quarter to one-third of an inch in length, have revolute margins, and a groove the length of the leaf on its under surface. The minute flowers grow singly in the leaf axils. Some are staminate; some pistillate; some are both. The flowers are globe-like, have three sepals, and may or may not have small purplish petals. The fruit is black and glaucous, and though used for food by the Eskimos, it is considered inedible or toxic here. The flowers bloom in June and July.

Photos © Donald C. Eastman

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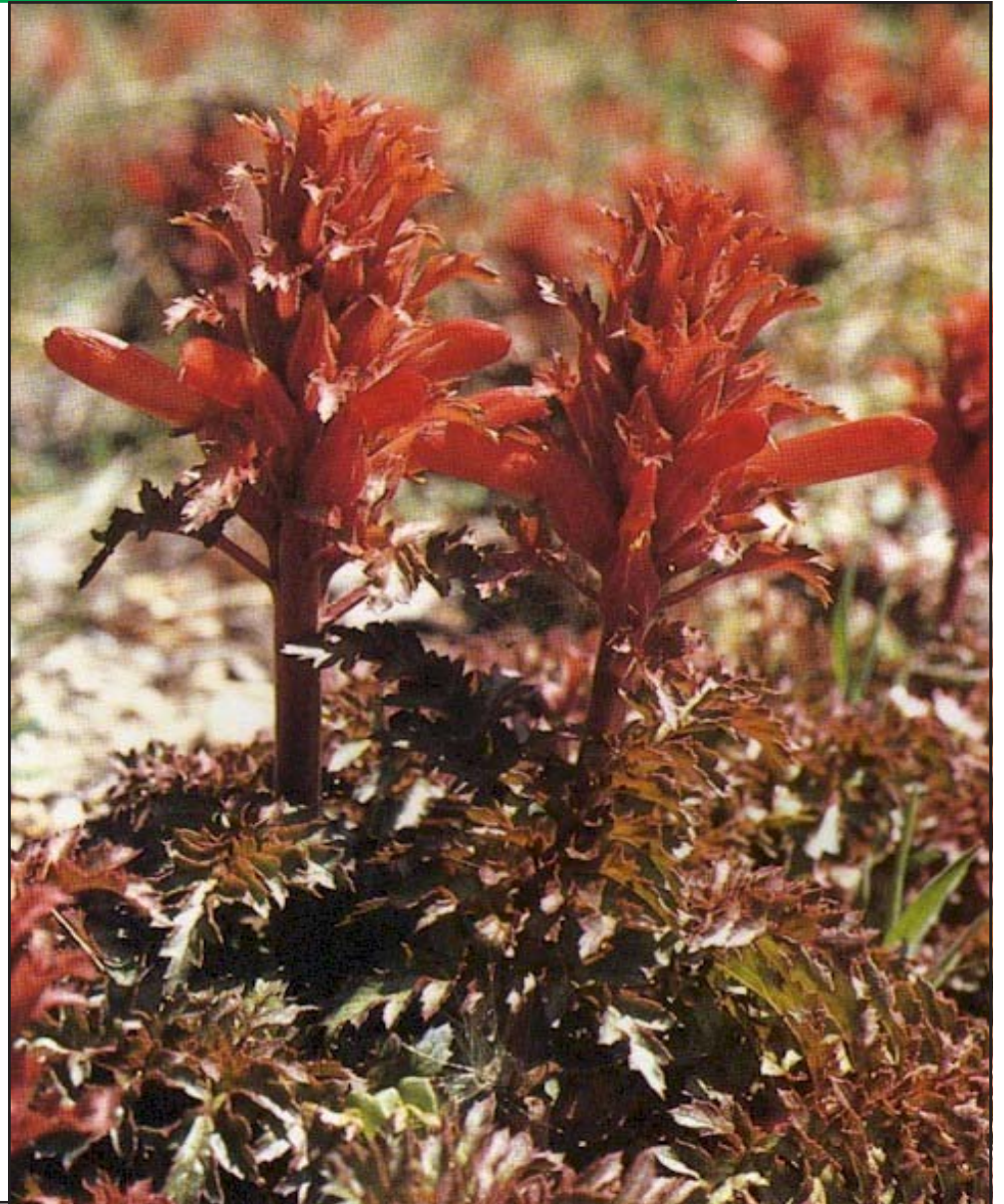
# Wondrous Works of Nature, continued

## Indian Warrior (*Pedicularis densiflora* Benth ex Hook.)

A striking plant because of the bright red color of its flowering head, this California species is found in Oregon only in the Siskiyou Mountains. It grows in gravelly or sandy soils in oak or pine forests.

*Pedicularis densiflora* has a stout stem up to ten inches tall; the leaves are pinnatifid with ten to twenty pairs of leaf segments that are deeply cleft or toothed into more segments. The flowers are one to one and one-half inches long. The upper lip is cylindric, arched, and without hairs; the lower lip is much shorter with broad, fringed, somewhat yellowish lobes. It blooms from March to June.

Photo © Donald C. Eastman



# Fence Me In!

## Living fences of Native Plants



Fences are barriers of many types that are useful for many reasons:

- To keep people or animals out of an area
- To keep people or animals in an area
- For privacy
- To quiet a noisy situation
- As a visual demarcation point
- Just for decoration

The same fence material put together in the same way won't work for all these purposes. Most materials could be used farther apart or closer together to give completely different appearance and effectiveness. Our favorite fencing is simple—pure Northwest Native plants!

A perfect example of fencing with native plants (though not NW Natives), at left is a livestock enclosure formed by a living fence of thorny *Caesalpinia* trees that the livestock won't eat. The plant is native to tropical and subtropical areas and illustrates the ecological and practical reasons behind living fences.

**About this photo:** It was taken by Keith Addison as seen on the website, Journey to Forever, (<http://journeytoforever.org/>). Journey to Forever is a pioneering expedition by a small, mobile NGO (Non-Government Organization) involved in environment and rural development work, starting from Hong Kong and travelling 40,000 kilometres through 26 countries in Asia and Africa to Cape Town, South Africa.

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# Fence Me In!, continued

There is such a wide variety of plants that can be used for fencing or borders. Usually the choice is hard to make because there are so many different plants from which to pick. The great thing about a living fence is you can trim it to maintain a particular height or you can let it grow as tall as the plant you've selected will go. You may want a very tall fence for a few years and then decided a shorter fence is more to your liking. No problem—just trim off as much as you want and viola! Your fence is shorter! As with any gardening choice, use a plant that enjoys the environment where you will plant it.

The photo at right shows a living fence that is rather unusual. The trees are planted very close together, trimmed of lower branches and the upper branches are allowed to flourish. Attractive and effective.



**About this photo:** The website Ascomoti, Achieving the sustainable development of Costa Rica's Central Pacific (<http://www.ascomoti.org>). They use living fences to protect reforested areas from cattle until the reforestation is strong enough to survive. Ascomoti only plants native species trees in the Rio Naranjo Biological Corridor. This is a mature living fence.

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# Fence Me In!, continued

Here are just a few Northwest Native plants that can be used for a living fence.

**Oregon Grape (Mahonia).** The two Mahonias best used for this purpose are the Tall Oregon Grape (*Mahonia aquifolia*) or Cascade Oregon Grape (*Mahonia nervosa*). If you need a tall fence (up to 10 feet), *m. aquifolia* is best. If you want a shorter fence (around 2 feet), *m. nervosa* is better. Both are good for shady areas and will also work well in sun. Mahonias have stickery leaves so they are discouraging to 'invaders' or 'escapees.' They are evergreen with bright yellow flowers and delicious purple berries.

**Blueblossom (Ceanothus thrysiflorus).** Here's an evergreen shrub that is covered year-round with shiny green leaves. It grows to around 6 feet tall and in late spring it has the most beautiful blue flowers. It's easy to care for, drought tolerant and doesn't mind sun or some shade.



Photos by  
Jennifer  
Rehm and  
JoAnn  
Onstott

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# Fence Me In!, continued



JoAnn's photo of the Silk Tassel leaves and Heidi's drawing of the catkins illustrate the unique beauty of this under-appreciated NW Native evergreen shrub.



**Snowbrush or Sticky Laurel (*Ceanothus velutinus*)**. Another of the *Ceanothus* family, this evergreen has a lovely scent. Grows from 2 to 8 feet tall with small white flowers.

**Silk Tassel (*Garrya elliptica*)**. An unusual evergreen shrub growing about 8 feet tall, this plant gets more dense and shrubby as it grows. It has very nice pendant catkins about 10 inches long that are followed by purple-gray flowers. Not often seen in gardens and as a fence this plant is striking!

**Labrador Tea (*Ledum glandulosum*)**. Here's another aromatic plant that will work for fencing. It's only about 3 feet at maturity. It has clusters of white flowers in late summer. Enjoys boggy areas.

**Pacific Wax Myrtle (*Myrica californica*)**. Typically found in dune landscapes, Pacific Wax Myrtle is dense and bushy, growing to 15 feet. Has small flowers and purple nutlets that attract birds. The fruit can be rendered for wax, an added bonus for crafters. Doesn't mind full sun or shade, fixes nitrogen in the soil which is very beneficial and will survive high winds.

[➡ More ➡](#)

# Fence Me In!, continued

**Rhododendron (r. macrophyllum).** These plants are well known to almost everyone who has been in the northwest for any length of time. Grand old specimens grow around the Oregon state capitol building in Salem, Oregon, and these natives grow wild all up and down the western side of the continent. The leathery leaves are evergreen and in late spring/early summer this plant flamboyantly produces large clusters of rose to purple/white flowers that'll take your breath away, they are so beautiful. It grows compact and dense in full sun and will be tall and leggy in shade. Rhodies grow for a long time—indeed those plants at the capitol building were there when I was a child. Grown in sun, Rhodies

will be around 7-8 feet tall and in shade can be easily 15 feet. In their old age they may be up to 30 feet tall. They do not mind being trimmed to maintain a shorter stature but please do not shear them! Cut out longer branches and keep the shorter ones instead, and your shrubs will be beautiful and natural looking.

Left, planted along the  
capitol building wall  
Photos by JoAnn  
Onstott and Jennifer  
Rehm

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# Fence Me In!, continued



Evergreen Huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*)  
berries are ripe and ready for picking  
Photo by JoAnn Onstott

**Evergreen Huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*)**. This is Wally's very favorite fruit and also loved by the many fortunate people who have discovered it. An evergreen, this Huck will reach 15 feet in forested areas or 3-5 feet in full sun. It has small pink/white flowers that look like fairy bells and are a magnet to hummingbirds. In late summer it forms black/purple fruits that are so good you won't believe they can be totally natural. Of course, the birds and other wildlife will give you a challenge to see who gets the most berries but with a fence full of them there should be enough for everyone. If you freeze a few you can actually enjoy summer in the middle of winter.

There are many more fine Northwest Native plants that work extremely well for fences. In the months to come we'll share more of them with you. Think beauty and utility and easy care—no need for painting these fantastic fences.



# Useful Plant Databases on the Web

Here is a good collection of web data bases that will be useful to professional growers and all native plant gardeners. This list is from a larger list compiled by Lawyer Nursery in 2002 and published in one of their flyers. I wish to thank them for this public service.

*Wally*

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## **American Bonsai Society**

[http://www.absbonsai.org/abs\\_home.html](http://www.absbonsai.org/abs_home.html)

## **Bonsai web**

<http://www.bonsaiweb.com>

Portal of links to educate about the art of bonsai.

## **CalPhotos**

<http://elib.cs.berkeley.edu/photos/>

Over 33,000 plant images from the University of California, Berkley

## **Cornell University online grafting course**

<http://instruct1.cit.cornell.edu/courses/hort494/graftage/hort494.index.html>

## **Fire effects on plant species**

<http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/>

USDA, Forest Service site.

## **Flora of North America Web Site**

<http://hua.huh.harvard.edu/FNA/>

Taxonomic relationships, distributions, and morphological characteristics of all plants native and naturalized found in North America.



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# Useful Plant Databases on the Web, Continued

## **Bonsai web**

<http://www.bonsaiweb.com>

Portal of links to educate about the art of bonsai.

## **Fire effects on plant species**

<http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/>

USDA, Forest Service site.

## **Forest Types of the United States**

<http://forestry.about.com/library/tree/bltypdex.htm>

Maps of the most common forest types.

## **Forestry index**

<http://forestryindex.net/>

Links to news & info on the forestry industry.

## **Cornell University online grafting course**

<http://instruct1.cit.cornell.edu/courses/hort494/graftage/hort494.index.html>

## **Growit.com Rooting Database**

<http://www.growit.com/Know/Rooting.htm>

“Extensive information on rooting cuttings of woody plants, organized by botanical name. Developed for commercial growers.”

## **The Native Plant Network**

<http://nativeplants.for.uidaho.edu/network/>

Information on how to propagate native plants of North America.



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# Useful Plant Databases on the Web, Continued

## **Woody Plant Seed Manual**

<http://www.wpsm.net/>

Manual by the US Forest Service covering seed biology, genetic Improvement of forest trees, seed testing, certification of tree seeds and other woody plant materials, and nursery practices.

## **River Corridor and Wetland Restoration**

<http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/restore/>

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) site

## **Soils**

<http://homepages.which.net/~fred.moor/soil/links/10102.htm>

A website about soil fertility, chemistry, and pH with many interesting links.

## **Soil Science Society of America**

<http://www.soils.org/>

Website for soil science professionals. Offers information and links.



Clodius Parnassian  
& Bleeding Heart  
*Dicentra formosa*





# Personal notes from Wally



## The Heart of the Tree

Henry Cuyler Bunner

(Born August 3, 1855; died May 11, 1896)

*What does he plant who plants a tree?  
He plants cool shade and tender rain,  
And seed and bud of days to be,  
And years that fade and flush again;  
He plants the glory of the plain;  
He plants the forest's heritage;  
The harvest of a coming age;  
The joy that unborn eyes shall see—  
These things he plants who plants a tree.*

**Good luck!**

**Wally**

Brewer's Spruce (*Picea breweriana*)

A rare garden treasure

Painting by Heidi D. Hansen



**In November 2010,  
Wallace W Hansen Northwest Native Plants  
Native Plant Nursery and Gardens  
closed permanently.**

Many thanks to all our gardening friends for your interest in the native plants of the Pacific northwest. It has been our pleasure to serve you.

**[www.nwplants.com](http://www.nwplants.com)**

Our website, [www.nwplants.com](http://www.nwplants.com), is no longer commercial. Our goal is to continue Wally's legacy of generating interest, even passion, in the magnificent native plants of the Pacific Northwest through information and illustration.

**Good luck! Good gardening!**



Red-Flowering Currant (*Ribes sanguineum*)