



PLANTS OF WESTERN WASHINGTON



A wide variety of delicate and amazing plants blanket the forest floor of Western Washington. As you explore the forest, see if you can spot these understory species, which are native to the Pacific Northwest.



SALAL
Gaultheria shallon

Description: A dense shrub 1-4 feet high. Waxy, dark-green leaves year-round. Whitish-pink flowers in spring, followed by dark-blue berries. Berries are edible but a little bit bland. A staple food among many Coast Salish tribes.



PACIFIC (TRAILING) BLACKBERRY
Rubus ursinus

Description: Trailing blackberry (a native species) can be found close to the ground, with a thin stem lined with small thorns. Leaflets are in clumps of three. Produces white or light pink flowers in spring, and hanging black berries in summer. Edible and delicious!



LOW OREGON GRAPE
Mahonia nervosa

Description: 12-inch long leaves with 9-19 leaflets per leaf. Each leaflet has serrated edges, a bit like holly. Older plants have some red leaflets. In spring, has bright yellow flowers that turn to medium-blue berries in summer. Berries are edible but quite tart and better cooked. Roots used as dye.



RED HUCKLEBERRY
Vaccinium parvifolium

Description: A fluffy-looking shrub, between 3-7 feet tall, often growing out of decaying stumps or logs. Stems are bright green and angular, with bright green nail-sized leaves that are oval-shaped and not serrated or toothed. Pink flowers turn into bright red berries in summer. Berries used as food source, bark for baskets and leaves used as tea.



TIGER LILY/COLUMBIA LILY
Lilium columbianum

Description: Plant is typically 24-48 inches in height and has multiple nodding orange flowers with dark brown or maroon spots that branch off its tall, slender stalks. Speckled tepals curve back toward the stem, and the extended anthers turn maroon with age. Bulbs used as a food source.



WESTERN SWORD FERN
Polystichum munitum

Description: A common evergreen fern 3-5 feet tall and wide in clump. Leaves (fronds) are 2-3 feet long and have alternate pointed, sharp-toothed leaflets with spores in rows of two underneath. Used for a variety of medicinal uses.



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VINE MAPLE
Acer circinatum



Description: A deciduous tree that usually grows as a large shrub. Leaves have a typical maple shape with 7 to 11 lobes that are pointed and toothed. In sun, develops red, orange, and yellow fall colors. Flexible wood used to make snowshoe frames and drum hoops.



BRACKEN FERN
Pteridium aquilinum



Description: Bracken fern has broad, triangular leaves, or fronds. The plant reaches a height of 2 to 4 feet. It grows directly from stout, black, horizontal root stalks. Can take over a disturbed site and spread out in an aggressive fashion. Rhizomes served as food



INDIAN PLUM / OSO BERRY
Oemleria cerasiformis



Description: A tall shrub, produces drooping clusters of small white flowers in spring. Leaves form in upright clumps along the stems. The 0.5" fruits start out tan to pale orange, transition from pink to reddish purple, then ripen bluish black with a thin waxy coat. Berries serve as a food source and bark as laxative.



SERVICEBERRY / SASKATOON
Amelanchier alnifolia



Description: Saskatoon has thin, round leaves that are not toothed at the base and regularly toothed along the upper margin. The showy flowers are white and star-like. The ripe, berry-like fruit is a dark, reddish purple to nearly black. Berries are an important food resource.



RATTLESNAKE PLANTAIN
Goodyera oblongifolia



Description: This member of the orchid family is common in conifer woodlands. It is identifiable more by the striped, leathery foliage, than the spike of white, waxy blooms which are rarely found in pristine condition. Used by Native Americans for a variety of medicinal uses.



Cascara
Frangula purshiana



Description: A deciduous, upright, small tree (or tall shrub) with alternate leaves and inconspicuous flower clusters which grows in the forest understory and along forest margins, marshes, and riparian and disturbed areas. Tolerates a range of moisture and light conditions Used by Native Americans as a laxative.