

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 5-19-04) Native Plant Week, ©2005

Governor Locke has declared May 24 through 30 as Native Plant Appreciation Week in Washington State. Our County Commissioners have also declared the week as Native Plant Appreciation Week in Kitsap County. Kitsap County members of the Washington Native Plant Society have planned a walk on Sunday afternoon May 23 at Illahee State Park. The walk is free and open to anyone who'd like to attend. Call 360-337-7157 for more information.

The Washington Native Plant Society website is www.wnps.org. You'll find information about Native Plant Appreciation Week plus a host of information about conserving and studying native plants. The Society address is: Washington Native Plant Society, 6310 NE 74th Street, Suite 21 SE, Seattle WA 98115. A "Wildflowers Across Washington" poster is featured on the site at six dollars for members and eight dollars for non-members with \$2.50 for shipping and handling. Native Plant Stewards in the Society take classes for approximately twelve weeks learning every botanical aspect of native plants. Several Stewards live in Kitsap County and volunteer to help educate the public about the value of native plants.

Washington State University Extension has an extensive native plant website at <http://gardening.wsu.edu/text/nwnative.htm>. You'll find a plethora of information at this site. If you don't know the name of native plants it doesn't matter – you can search for plants by growing conditions. You'll find ground covers, bulbs, shrubs, vines, trees (both deciduous and evergreen), ferns, and aquatics). Color photos illustrate the plants. Also included are how to plant and propagate. Native plants are well-suited to grow healthily in our dry summers and wet winters. Once established they are relatively care-free.

Three books you'll want to peruse are "Landscaping for Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest" (University of Washington Press) by Russell Link, wildlife biologist with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife covering a wealth of growing conditions and situations. By following Links tips for utilizing native plants in landscaping the gardener can also attract wildlife at the same time. Arthur R. Kruckeberg is an icon in the Northwest in the field of native plants. His book "Gardening With Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest" (University of Washington Press) is always on the list of must-have books for those who want to learn more about native plants. Another favorite is "Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast – Washington, Oregon, British Columbia & Alaska" by Pojar and MacKinnon (Lone Pine). This field guide is a book you'll want to take with you any time you're looking for native plants for your garden or just to take a walk through the woods or parks nearby. Plants are shown in color and grouped by categories, along with Native lore and uses and maps showing the range of where plants grow along the Pacific coast. When explored adding a book or books on Native Plants to my library I could not limit myself to only one of these books – I ended up with all three. Check these books out at a local library and decide for yourselves.

WSU Extension, City of Bainbridge Island and Washington SEA Grant conducted a Living Along the Water Workshop last weekend and some of the native plants suggested for shoreline use are: *Rosa nutkana*, *Vaccinium ovatum*, *Ribes sanguineum*, *Holodiscus discolor*, and *Amelanchier alnifolia*. These plants would work in gardens away from the shore too. *Amelanchier alnifolia* (commonly called Service Berry) grows as a shrub or tree. It has striking fall color and is an early spring bloomer with a profusion of white blossoms. *Holodiscus discolor* is also called goat's beard and it's a climbing vine. It's great for bird habitat growing to twelve feet or higher. The foamy, feathery white flowers turn tan as summer progresses. The tan flower's seeds provide abundant food for birds through the fall and into winter. *Ribes sanguineum* is best known as flowering currant. Our native *Ribes* has rose flowers in early spring attracting the first returning hummingbirds. It too has good fall color. It can grow into quite the large bush but it's very appealing. *Vaccinium ovatum*, evergreen huckleberry, loves sun, has edible fruit (delicious in jams, pies and tarts) and has year round interest. New growth is colorful as is the deep green of winter. Flowers and berries give wonderful interest. *Rosa nutkana* (Nootka Rose) makes a good hedge, tolerates salt water and wet roots. It provides wildlife habitat too. Its bare branches in winter are quite interesting to the eye.

I hope you too will celebrate Native Plant Appreciation Week by taking a walk through a forest or park; visiting one of our many local nurseries selling native plants; check out one of the native plant websites or read a great book on natives.

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