

Gardening with Native Plants

Information Sheet

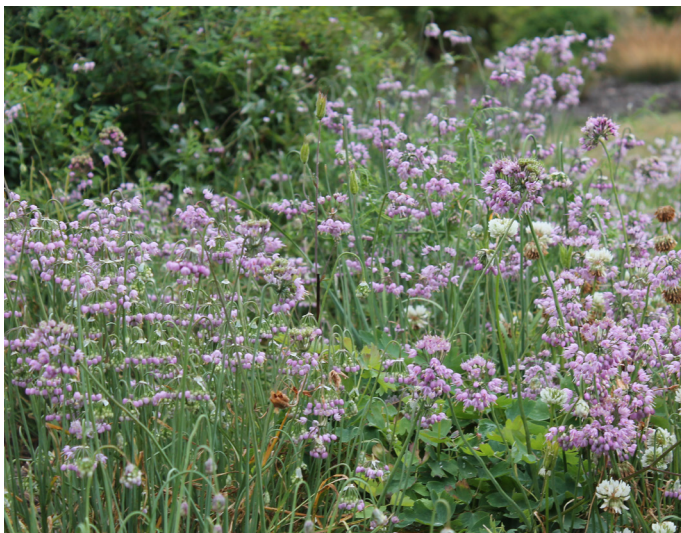
Water Conservation

What are native plants?

Native plants thrive naturally in our region and are vital components of healthy and resilient ecosystems and cultural practices. Once established, they rely on rainwater and provide many benefits such as food and habitat for people and for biodiversity. Invasive species, climate change and land use change have reduced the abundance and habitat of native plants.

Benefits of gardening with native plants

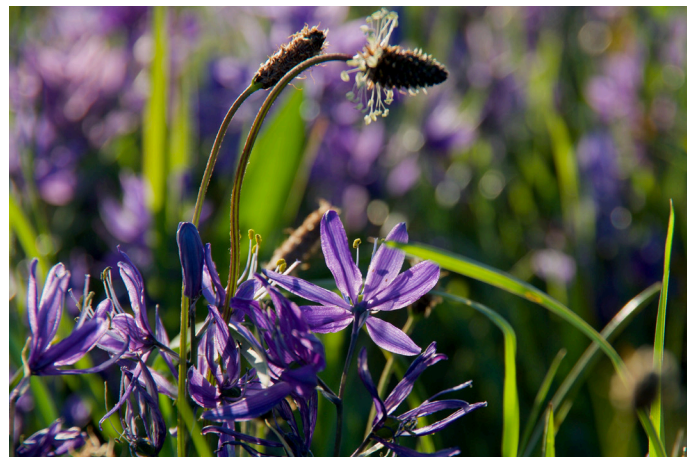
- Little to no watering once established
- Support biodiversity and healthy ecosystems
- Provide habitat and food for local wildlife, migratory birds and pollinators
- Little maintenance required
- Help manage rainwater runoff
- Reduce soil compaction with deep root systems
- Sustainable alternative to non-native and invasive species



Nodding onion makes a great addition to a sunny meadow or container.

Creating a native plant garden

Native plants make a great addition to any type of garden from ornamental garden, sloped wildflower meadow or balcony container garden. Plant native plants in the fall to take advantage of the fall and winter rains.



Camas create beautiful meadows and support Garry oak ecosystems.

Right plant, right place

Choose the right plant whose needs fit the specific site conditions found in the garden as it will naturally thrive with less maintenance. Proper plant selection, location and healthy soils will create thriving gardens that are more resistant to pests and do not require fertilizers.

Before you plant, understand the specific growing conditions:

- Light conditions — full sun, part sun, shade
- Soil type — organic, sandy loam, clay or mineral soil
- Drainage — does water drain quickly or pool?
- Understand the full growth size of plants and space apart accordingly
- Group plants with similar water needs to save time and water

For a list of native plants for specific conditions visit crd.bc.ca/nativeplants.



Tall Oregon grape makes a great hedge and provides cover for native wildlife. Native butterflies and birds are attracted to its nectar and berries.

Create healthy soil

Good soil structure is created by billions of soil organisms to allow air, water and plant roots in the soil. Add compost to feed soil organisms and recycle nutrients back into the soil. Compost also helps keep your soil loose and fertile, helps retain moisture and allows for better drainage. Containers also need a rich soil with compost as many potting mixes are lightweight and not for long-term planting.

Support biodiversity

Having co-evolved with local wildlife, native plants provide critical food and shelter. Planting a diversity of native plants can attract more wildlife and supply food throughout the year. Plant flowers and shrubs of different colours, shapes and bloom times for supply throughout the season.



Woolly sunflowers are great for containers, in ground gardens and around vegetables. These bright coloured flowers attract pollinators and beneficial insects to your garden, making your vegetables do better.

Avoid invasive species

Avoid planting and remove invasive plants such as daphne laurel, English ivy, periwinkle, morning glory, English holly and knotweed species. Watch for invasive plants in wildflower mixes and labels that say “vigorous self-seeders” or “rapid spreaders”. Ask your plant nursery about non-invasive plants.

Add mulch

Mulch is any material added onto the soil surface such as leaves, compost, grass clippings, straw, wood chips and coarse bark. A thick layer of mulch discourages weeds and greatly reduces water needs. Choose a mulch appropriate for your plants as some mulch can increase the acidity of the soil. Save the leaves that fall from your trees to use as mulch.

Water wisely

Adapted to our Northern Mediterranean climate, native plants are used to our dry summers and do not need additional watering once established in the right conditions. If growing in a container, check the moisture regularly as they tend to dry out faster than in ground.

Avoid pesticides & herbicides

Native plants have fewer pests and disease with no watering and fertilizer required. Avoid using pesticides that may harm people, pets and wildlife and cause pollution. Check with your municipality for regulations about pesticide use in your area.