

Create beautiful, easy-to-maintain naturescapes that attract birds and butterflies by

Gardening with Native Plants



Inside...

- Top Ten Plants
- Attracting Birds & Butterflies
- Garden Design Tips
- Controlling Weeds
- Create Habitat for Wildlife
- How to Save Water & Money





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What is a Naturescape?

Many Vancouver Island residents want attractive, easy to maintain, drought tolerant gardens that attract birds and butterflies. The best plant choices for gardens are often the native plants that thrive naturally in our region. A native plant includes those species that were here prior to European settlement. Rewarding and dynamic, “naturescapes” are functional gardens that reflect the native richness and beauty of our unique region. This guide will help you improve your garden: the best plants, design tips, recommended nurseries, and other expert recommendations are inside.

Why are native plants great for gardens?

South-eastern Vancouver Island is one of Canada’s top nature hot spots, but our rare native ecosystems like the Garry Oak meadows and older Coastal Douglas Fir forests are now gone from over 95 percent of their former range due to urban development. Invasive introduced plants escaping from gardens are quickly changing natural habitats for the worse.

Creating a naturescape (native plant garden) on your land is part of the solution to habitat loss. The actions of many individual landowners can make a big difference for wildlife in our region. A changing climate and booming population growth are forcing communities to rethink our prolific outdoor water use. Using showy native plants in your garden can also save you time and money; forget about watering, artificial fertilizers, and toxic pesticides. Because native plants have evolved in this climate for countless generations, they attract local song birds and insect pollinators. The various plants in this guide fit into any type of garden setting.

How to use this guide

Numbers on photos refer to information in the Plant Table (centrefold). The table provides information on plant characteristics, uses, and suggested species combinations. Look for the insert page that lists gardening resources including plant suppliers, demonstration sites, and websites. Bring this guide to your favorite nursery and show them what species you want. Avoid cultivated varieties or introduced plants with similar names to be sure local wildlife can use them. Find a native species to replace invaders and thirsty plants in your garden.



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Top Ten Naturescape Plants

Just getting started? HAT's Top Ten plant picks are beautiful, hardy, and readily available. Start small: Establish your garden with these plants during the fall rains to get a jump on the summer dry season.



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Oceanspray

This beautiful shrub thrives in poor soils, drought, and salt spray. Plant it on a dry slope to prevent erosion and attract seed eating birds. Lorquin's admiral loves the creamy flower tufts that become orange-brown seed heads in winter.



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Tall Oregon Grape

Blue edible berries, big yellow blooms, and shiny leaves in one drought tolerant perennial! Plant several behind low shrubs, around foundations, and in thickets. Spiny leaves, creeping rhizomes and upright habit creates a people barrier or evergreen hedge.



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Broad-leaved Stonecrop

A low groundcover for hot & sunny rock gardens, containers & garden borders. Edible, succulent leaves range from sage green to red. A hardy perennial, this plant's showy yellow flowers are a magnet for pollinators and hummingbirds.



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Rocky Mountain Juniper

Tough evergreen shrub or tree replaces a thirsty cedar hedge and can be planted on top of berms. Excellent year-round privacy screen, food and cover for birds. Long-lived and aromatic, native junipers also come in creeping forms.



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Sword Fern

Attractive copper colored fiddle-heads in spring unfurl into tough, waist-high evergreen fronds. This hardy perennial complements finer foliage of groundcovers in partial sun to shade. Other good native fern choices include Deer Fern and Licorice Fern.



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Nodding Onion

A drift of this long-lasting lily lures pollinators and butterflies for months. Handles salt spray, wind, drought & poor, gravelly soils. Best for dry open woods, exposed sandy meadows & rock gardens where it spreads quickly.



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Red Flowering Currant

Hummingbirds feed from brilliant pink to red blooms in the spring, and other birds enjoy currants in the fall. A showy specimen plant or massed in the back border, this shrub is a gardeners favorite.



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Woolly Sunflower

Bees and butterflies will party around showy drifts of intense yellow that lasts all summer. Perennial with light green, velvety foliage enjoys dry shallow soils and looks great in banks, rockeries, and borders.



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False Lily of the Valley

Low, shade loving groundcover features small white perfumed flowers and creeping rhizomes. Greenish berries turn red in winter. Drifts of shiny spade shaped leaves look great with strawberry, sword fern and bleeding heart. Grows under cedar too.



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Kinnikinnick

An early blooming, trailing evergreen ground cover with red berries in winter for birds. Best for pavement edges & dry, sunny slopes. Creeping branches cover walls and tolerate foot traffic. A caterpillar host and hummingbird feeder, this plant dresses up any site.



Plant Table

Ref #	Common Name	Botanical Name	Goes Well With (Ref #)	Max Height 100cm = 1m = 3.3 ft	Soil: Dry • Moist • Well Drained	Light: Shade • Sun • Partial Sun	Bloom Period	Characteristics	Plant descriptions, suggested uses, and additional species
1	Garry Oak	<i>Quercus garryana</i>	2, 3, 6, 14	15 - 30m	D, M, WD	S, PS	n/a		Slow-growing, can be a large tree or shrubby bush, leathery dark glossy leaves, acorns attract many species
2	Arbutus	<i>Arbutus menziesii</i>	1, 3, 29, 32	15 - 20m	D, WD	S, PS	Apr-May		Fragrant showy white flower clusters, red berries, beautiful red and green peeling bark on smooth, curvy branches
3	Shore Pine	<i>Pinus contorta</i>	1, 2, 26, 29, 32	10 - 15m	D, WD	S	n/a		A seaside favorite! Handles salt, wind & poor soil, grows straight in average soil, bonzai in poor, acid soil
4	Pacific Willow	<i>Salix lucida</i>	15, 17, 20, 24	6 - 15m	M	S	Apr-May		Create thickets near water, shade out weeds, and grow from cuttings. Also try: <i>S. scouleriana</i> , <i>S. hookeriana</i>
5	Vine Maple	<i>Acer circinatum</i>	11, 16, 22, 38	3 - 7m	D, M	Sh, S, PS	Apr		Red flowers in spring, red leaves in autumn, resprouts from roots. Forms tree in open, more shrubby in shade
6	Cascara	<i>Rhamnus purshiana</i>	2, 11, 22, 23	8 - 10m	M	PS	May-Jun		Grows well on wet, disturbed sites, inconspicuous flowers produce blue-black berries. Bark is powerful laxative
7	Black Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus douglasii</i>	13, 16, 23, 24	6 - 8m	M	S, PS	May		Copious thorns resist beavers. White flowers, black berries, small tree or broad shrub likes organic soil. scarlet in autumn
8	Rocky Mountain Juniper	<i>Juniperus scopulorum</i>	10, 19, 32, 40	6 - 15m	D, M	S	n/a		Great for poor, rocky or sandy soils, tolerate salt spray, replace cedar hedge. Try <i>J. communis</i> for groundcover
9	Sitka Mountain Ash	<i>Sorbus sitchensis</i>	7, 20, 35, 39	1 - 4m	M	S, PS	Jun		White flower clusters, showy red fruit, red fall leaves, small tree or shrub with leaflets that don't need raking up!
10	Saskatoon	<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	12, 14, 16, 29	1 - 5m	D, M	S, PS	Apr-May		Showy white flowers, delicious fruit, spreading rhizomes. Drought, salt and clay tolerant. Deer browse leaves
11	Indian Plum	<i>Oemleria cerasiformis</i>	17, 15, 20, 24	1.5 - 5m	D, M	Sh, PS	Mar		Hedge or borders, very early flowering, cucumber-tasting plums in May; use male & female plants to ensure fruiting
12	Red-flowering Currant	<i>Ribes sanguineum</i>	10, 11, 16, 29	1 - 3m	D, M	S, PS	Apr-Jun		Very showy with early blooms, no thorns, crinkly maple-like leaves on a compact shrub. Dark fruits eaten by birds
13	Nootka Rose	<i>Rosa nutkana</i>	7, 19, 20	0.5 - 3m	M, WD	S, PS	May-Jul		Large, fragrant, lilac-pink flowers, large rose hips are reddish-orange, stabilizes stream banks, keeps people at bay
14	Oceanspray	<i>Holodiscus discolor</i>	16, 19, 23, 34	1 - 4m	D, M	S, PS	Jul-Aug		Big, showy flower clusters become puffball orange-brown seed heads. Grows taller in shade. Top ten pick!
15	Red Elderberry	<i>Sambucus racemosa</i>	17, 18, 20, 24	2 - 4m	M	PS	Apr-Jun		Fast growing shrub, showy white flower clusters attract hummingbirds, shiny red berry clusters and big leaves
16	Mock Orange	<i>Philadelphus lewisii</i>	11, 14, 22, 29	3m	D, WD	S, PS	May-Jun		Early fragrant white flowers, fast-growing, adaptable, broad upright shrub. Dense seasonal screening
17	Red-osier Dogwood	<i>Cornus sericea</i>	13, 15, 19, 20	1 - 5m	D, M	Sh, S, PS	May-Jun		Hardy, fast-growing, white flowers, showy red twigs, brilliant red fall leaves, fruit is white to bluish
18	Thimbleberry	<i>Rubus parviflorus</i>	11, 15, 20, 24	1.5 - 3m	M	Sh, S, PS	Jun-Jul		Large, fragrant pink flower produces sweet berries. Spreading streamside shrub forms thickets with snowberry
19	Tall Oregon Grape	<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>	12, 13, 23, 24	1 - 2m	D, M	S, PS	Apr-May		Highly recommended! Tough holly-like leaves, yellow flower clusters, edible blue-black berries, dry slope stabilizer
20	Pacific Ninebark	<i>Physocarpus capitatus</i>	11, 15, 17, 18	3 - 4m	M	Sh, S, PS	Jun		"Snowball bush" likes wet, open places like streams and lake shores, excellent for securing slopes. Attractive bark
21	Evergreen Huckleberry	<i>Vaccinium ovatum</i>	19, 23, 34, 39	1 - 2m	D, M	Sh, PS	Apr-May		Bushy with leathery, shiny, leaves, pink, bell-shaped flowers, sweet, glossy edible purple berries - harvest after frost
22	Trumpet Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera ciliosa</i>	5, 6, 10, 16	up to 10m	D, WD	Sh, PS	May-Jul		A vigorous vine with orange tubular flowers followed by clusters of red berries in the fall. Climbs decks and trees
23	Sword Fern	<i>Polystichum munitum</i>	5, 24, 38, 39	0.3 - 1.2m	D, M	Sh, S, PS	n/a		Grows fast, protects shady slopes, adapts to sun, glossy leathery dense fronds provide cover for amphibians
24	Salal	<i>Gaultheria shallon</i>	19, 23, 38, 39	1 - 1.5m	D, M	Sh, S, PS	Mar-Jul		Excellent cover for shade and sandy soils, Berries make delicious jelly. Tough, shiny leaves can be pruned back.
25	Aster	<i>Aster conspicuus</i>	12, 30, 31, 32	35 - 80cm	D, M	S	Jul - Aug		Bumblebees love the violet blooms with yellow centers, creeping rhizome fills perennial beds
26	Nodding Onion	<i>Allium cernuum</i>	27, 28, 29, 30	20 - 40cm	D	S	Jun-Aug		Pollinators' delight! Bulbs multiply quickly in sandy soil & rockeries, showy long season bloomer. Easy transplant
27	Great Camas & other lilies	<i>Camassia leichtlinii</i>	1, 2, 28, 30, 32	30 - 70cm	D, M	S, PS	Apr-Jun		Edible bulbs multiply quickly, attractive seed heads for meadows, mix with Common Camas, Fawn lily, Tiger Lily, etc
28	Coastal Strawberry	<i>Fragaria chiloensis</i>	26, 29, 31, 32	5 - 15cm	D WD	S, PS	Apr-May		Tasty groundcover with white flowers and sweet berries. Try <i>F. virginiana</i> or <i>F. vesca</i> for shade. Transplant runners
29	Kinnikinnick	<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	3, 26, 28, 33	5 - 15cm	D, WD	S, PS	Apr-Jun		Salt tolerant groundcover forms large mats, takes trampling & gravelly soils. Covers walls, rockeries. Red berries
30	Pearly Everlasting	<i>Anaphalis margaritacea</i>	25, 27, 31	30 - 60cm	D	S PS	Jul-Sept		Crisp papery flowers, long bloomer provides late season interest with yarrow and woolly sunflower
31	Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	26, 27, 31, 32	30 - 50cm	D	S, PS	Jun-Aug		Tough perennial, large, white, long lasting flower heads, low, feathery foliage
32	Woolly Sunflower	<i>Eriophyllum lanatum</i>	3, 25, 27, 30	10 - 60cm	D, WD	S	May-Jul		Long blooming rockery plant with silver-green leaves. Drought tolerant & self-sowing when established. Excellent choice!
33	Broad-leaved Stonecrop	<i>Sedum spathulifolium</i>	26, 28, 29, 30	15cm	D, WD	S	Jun-Jul		Showy bright yellow flowers, succulent edible leaves, place in rock outcrops, on concrete. Salt tolerant
34	Low Oregon Grape	<i>Mahonia nervosa</i>	12, 36, 37, 40	40 - 80cm	D, M	Sh, PS	Apr		Perennial creeping and low in full sun, erect and tall in semi-shade with larger leaves. Early flowers, tart berries
35	Fringecup	<i>Tellima grandiflora</i>	23, 21, 24, 37	40 - 80cm	M	Sh, PS	Apr-Jun		Fragrant white flower spires rise from fuzzy, heart shaped leaves. spreading habit, resists slugs
36	Red Columbine	<i>Aquilegia formosa</i>	24, 35, 38, 40	40 - 80cm	WD	Sh	May-Jun		Perennial adapts to rocky soils and can be used on steep banks, front of border plantings and streamsides
37	False Solomon's Seal	<i>Smilacina racemosa</i>	23, 24, 39, 40	30 - 100cm	M	Sh, PS	Apr-Jun		Showy white flowers and red berries, ornamental foliage, shade-tolerant, easy to transplant
38	Pacific Bleeding Heart	<i>Dicentra formosa</i>	21, 24, 27, 39	25 - 45cm	M	Sh, PS	Feb-Jul		Rose pink flowers extend above mounds of grey-green lacy foliage that spreads well in shady moist soils
39	Wood Sorrel	<i>Oxalis oregana</i>	23, 35, 38, 40	5 - 20cm	M	Sh	May-Jul		Perennial with spreading rhizomes and dainty white flowers enjoyed by gnomes in drifts of soft clover leaves
40	False Lily of the Valley	<i>Maianthemum dilatatum</i>	23, 35, 36, 39	15 - 25cm	M	Sh, PS			Delicate white flowers followed by berries turning red in winter with glossy foliage spreads well in conifer mulch

attract butterflies
 attract hummingbirds
 shelter for wildlife
 food for wildlife
 food for people
 fall colour
 prevent erosion
 pollinators
 birds
 deer resistant
 hedge/privacy
 evergreen
 winter food



Gardening tips for the nature lover

The three essentials: food, shelter and water. Seed and berry producing shrubs feed and shelter birds. Provide a variety of food sources through the seasons by leaving seed heads on plants. A water feature (protected from cats and hawks) will attract many types of birds and animals.

Butterflies boycott pesticides. Feeding adults prefer certain plant species, but missing plants for caterpillars often restricts butterfly abundance. Plant poplar and willow, maintain areas of natural meadow, create a mud puddle, and tolerate some chewed leaves. **Swallowtail caterpillars** eat herbs with umbrella-like flowers including Spring Gold, Lomatiums, & Cow Parsnip. Some butterflies overwinter in the leaf litter that renews the soil. Plant tall sticks in sunny quiet spots for butterflies and dragonflies to rest.

Don't feed the deer. Choose aromatic plants with spiny foliage to control deer browsing. Our region's very high deer population will eat the following only as a last resort: Salal, Oregon Grape, Sword Fern, Woolly Sunflower, and Kinnikinnick. Deer avoid sheltered pots of bloodmeal, but fencing is a sure solution.

Let it Rot for wildlife. Keep some dead tree trunks and dead branches on living trees for woodpeckers, allow logs to rot in place for salamanders, and build a brush pile for squirrels. Rock piles, patches of long grass, and leaf litter are good habitat elements too. Downed wood holds valuable summer moisture and becomes organic soil that lets groundcovers thrive.

Mulch from leaves is the best soil protection and fertilizer for native plants. Make a large wire leaf bin in the fall and then spread composted leaves around plants in the spring. Keep the pile moist and sprinkle with lime to speed composting. Fir cone mulch discourages digging cats, wood chips protect soil from compaction, and conifer needles make excellent pathway mulch. Fallen leaves and twigs are what fungi convert to soil; let nutrients recycle back to the plants that made them. Avoid peat moss: It is mined from bogs.

Lawns consume the most effort, chemicals, and water of any landscape treatment. Reduce lawn area and top dress remaining turf with sifted compost in the early spring to promote healthy, spongy, drought tolerant soil. Compacted soil favours weeds and prevents water infiltration. Never drive vehicles on lawns or gardens during wet months.

Easily convert lawns to garden beds by covering grass with 3 layers of re-used cardboard under 10 cm (4 in) of mulch (leaf mould, wood chip, bark bits, etc.). Raid the cardboard bin of a local appliance/bicycle retailer and cover up your weed patches too. Plant right through the cardboard in late winter to maximize drought hardiness of new plants. Never use unbiodegradable black plastic cloth as a weed barrier.

Wildflower meadows can be mowed only after seed set (July) to encourage blooms. Light mulching in late winter can help lily species (camas, onions, etc) compete with introduced grasses. Control weeds during the summer drought for maximum effect. Avoid weeding from Jan to July in Camas meadows (below).

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Garden design

Choose the right plant for the right spot. Your site may have sunny dry areas, shady moist places, or a combination of both. Watch how water flows and how the sun moves across the sky, during all seasons. Choose plants that will grow only to the height you require, and make sure there is room to grow. Taller plants and soil mounds can enhance your site by creating a diversity of living conditions or microclimates.

Whether you're screening scenes, holding slopes, shading promenades, frocking rocks, or coordinating borders, there is a hardy and charming native plant for the job. Most plants like a sunny moist site, but a shady dry site may require heavy mulching or irrigation to grow plants. Think in vertical layers to maximize your naturescape's appeal for people and wildlife. Place ground covers beside lawn and hard surfaces, followed behind by herbs, ferns and bushes. Create shrub thickets with small trees for vertical layers of shelter.



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Shady Moist Site

If a space receives little or no direct sun, choose plants that prefer those conditions. A shiny groundcover of False Lily of the Valley looks great under bold Sword Ferns and lacy Bleeding Heart. Columbine and Camas add some heat to cool greens. Avoid planting under roof lines as they are too dry.



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Sunny Dry Site

If a spot is hot and dry with plenty of direct sun, choose only dry soil plants. In this example, clumping Fescue grass is combined with Oregon grape and nodding onion to create a soft and colorful ground cover under Shore Pine. Coastal Strawberry and Kinnikinnick will thrive in harsh conditions if you mulch in spring..



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Are You Harboursing Aliens?

Some introduced plants escape from gardens, grow into natural areas, and overwhelm native ecosystems. Avoid dumping garden waste in the woods. "Wildflower mix" contains many invasive weed species. Steer clear of known weedy species like English Holly and replace invaders (below) with similar native alternatives.

LAMIUM

BUTTERFLY BUSH

DAPHNE

ST JOHN'S WORT

ENGLISH IVY

PERIWINKLE

ENGLISH HOLLY



Gardening with Native Plants

Gardening tips for the nature lover *continued*

Get nursery-grown stock - plants in the wild already have a job. Container grown plants transplant well and grow faster. Your naturescape project will support the growing interest among residents and nurseries alike. Ask for plants sourced from Vancouver Island seed to ensure vigour and adaptability. Reputable nurseries are listed on the insert page.

The Saanich Native Plant Salvage Program is a way for gardeners to **rescue native plants** from development sites. Lilies and ferns are easy to recover through authorized salvage opportunities. See insert for registration.

When planting shrubs, make the hole larger than the root ball but keep the same depth as in the pot. To promote healthy growth, cut any roots that wrap around the root ball, and do not add soil amendments. **Compact the soil around roots and mulch heavily** without covering plant stems.

Fish and frogs will thank you for cleaning up pet waste and preventing chemical fertilizer runoff from entering freshwater streams and wetlands. Green scum on ponds in summer is a sign of nutrient pollution. Shade ponds with trees to keep water cool and oxygen rich. Native shrub buffers protect stream banks and water quality while providing fish with insect food.

Kids dig gardens! Naturescapes are fun places for children to learn through play and observation. Children enjoy edible berries and fragrant flowers, hiding spots in thickets, high perches, forts, catwalks, and tunnels. Share with them the wonders of spider webs and birds eggs. Nature is the best teacher; foster childrens' curiosity through experiences that enrich their lives with meaning.



Create a Conservation Legacy!

HAT is a strong voice for conservation in our unique region. Please consider joining HAT's membership. We accept donations to support our efforts to protect the community's natural spaces.

Habitat Acquisition Trust is a non-profit regional land trust and registered charitable society established in 1996. HAT's mandate is to secure significant natural lands on southern Vancouver Island and the southern Gulf Islands through acquisition, conservation covenants, research, and community education.



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Naturescape concept from Naturescape BC.

Visit www.naturescapebc.ca for province-wide Naturescaping ideas.

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