

A Homeowner's Guide to NATURESCAPING



Naturescaping is landscaping that uses native plants and provides healthy habitat for birds, butterflies, and other wildlife. Nature-friendly landscaping also helps conserve water, reduce polluted stormwater runoff (protecting our local waterways) and may save time and money on maintenance!

Why Naturescaping?

Naturescaping is easier than traditional landscaping. Growing exotic flowers, trees, and grasses can take a lot of time, water, chemicals, and hard work! Native plants are adapted to our wet winters and dry summers and are naturally attractive to wildlife. They also thrive without pesticides and fertilizers - putting more money back in your pocket. Once established, native plants require little maintenance. Need an example? Check out the native plants at the Brattain House (10th and "G" streets in Springfield).

Not ready to re-design your entire yard? No worries. Try naturescaping just one corner of your yard. There are no rules saying you can't mix naturescaping with traditional landscaping!



Who says you have to give up pretty flowers to go native?!

Douglas spirea

Plant this showy shrub in at least partial sun and be ready for it to spread! The pink flowers attract butterflies and bees and its thicket-forming nature is ideal cover and nesting habitat for birds.



How to Begin

This guidebook will take you step-by-step through the process of beginning your naturescaping adventure! Just like traditional gardening, naturescaping has a few rules to follow and there is a lot of room for creativity.

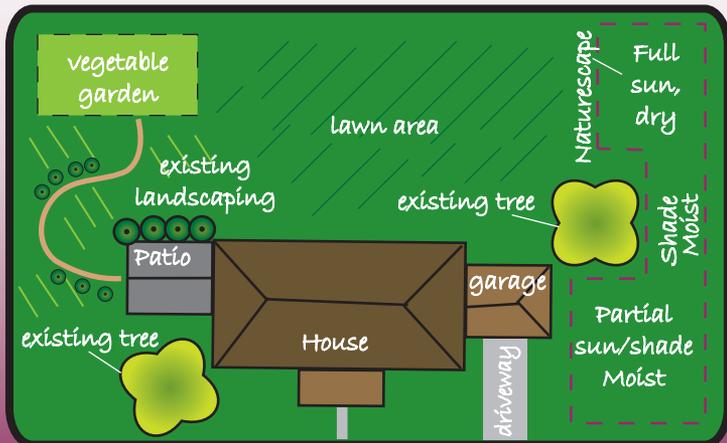
Step 1: Get to Know Your Yard

Take some time to really get to know your yard. Every yard has micro-habitats. For example: areas that are dry/wet, areas that are shady/sunny or varying slopes. Taking note of these micro-habitats will make your naturescaping more successful. Also, note what type of soil you have and what drainage is like. You also might find it helpful to make a plan of your yard with structures, trees and plants you want to keep in place, micro-habitats and designated areas (such as vegetable garden or lawn) called out. This can be useful when designing your naturescape and choosing plants. This is also a good time to locate any underground utilities. Don't forget to call 811 before you dig!

Step 2: Design Considerations

Now that you have a site plan it is time to start designing your naturescape. Using the plan identify some design opportunities. Design opportunities include views - views from your yard and inside your house that you want to maintain or emphasize, as well as views you may want to obscure. Some site limitations can also be opportunities. For example, a really wet area might be an opportunity to incorporate a water feature.

Starting with a site plan can be helpful! Make it as detailed as you like.



Step 3: Choose Your Plants

Now that you know where you plan on naturescaping and what the microhabitat is, it is time to select your plants. Local native plant nurseries, native plant books and online resources can be helpful when choosing plants. There is a list of common Pacific Northwest native plants at the end of this guide, but it certainly does not cover all that are available! Think about choosing your plants in three steps:

1. Choose any trees first. Due to their size and the influence they will have on the rest of the landscape consider which, if any, trees you would like to include. Consider some of the following:
 - What size of a tree can your area accommodate?
 - Which trees meet the conditions of the microhabitat?
 - Would you prefer a deciduous or evergreen tree?
2. Next, consider which shrubs you want to include. Consider the light, soil, and moisture conditions of your site first. Once that narrows the list of plants to choose from ask yourself some more questions.
 - Do you want deciduous or evergreen?
 - Do you want a flowering shrub?
 - Are you trying to attract any particular wildlife? Birds? Butterflies?

When arranging your shrubs consider mixing and matching randomly. Planting an odd number of shrubs tends to lend itself to a more natural look.

3. Lastly, select your herbaceous plants. Herbaceous plants - perennials and annuals - are smaller, non-woody plants. Narrow the list of herbaceous plants down by looking the light, soil, and moisture conditions of your site. Also take note of growth characteristics. Some herbaceous plants will spread a lot to fill in space while others will spread slowly or not at all - acting more as accents to your naturescape.

Step 4: Site Preparation

You're past the toughest part and now the fun begins! Time to get your hands dirty and prepare the site for planting.

First, examine the area for any invasives that need removal, for example English ivy, vinca (periwinkle), and morning glory just to name a few.

Second, determine the status of your soil. The soil may need the addition of some organic compost; particularly of you are converting a lawn area where soils become compacted.

Step 5: Planting

The best time to plant is during the plants' dormant season. For most plants that is from late fall to early spring. While you can certainly plant during later spring and summer, be ready to give the plants some extra attention. Fall is particularly a good time to plant trees and shrubs. It gives the plants a chance to root during the wet winter months and increases their chance of surviving a hot, dry summer.

Many plants will come with planting guidelines, but a good rule of thumb is to dig the hole at least 1.5 times the size of the root mass. It is also a good idea to mix in some organic matter such as compost, peat moss, or potting soil when you back fill the hole. The base of the main stalk or the trunk should be flush with the level of the ground once planted. Once everything is planted putting down a layer of mulch will help hold in moisture and fight weed growth.

Maintaining Your Naturescape

Here comes one of the best features about naturescaping - maintenance is minimal. The primary maintenance will take place through the first one or two summers. Be sure to water your plants until they get established. You will also need to pull weeds and combat invasives until the plants are established enough to out-compete the weeds.



Naturescaping for Wildlife

Because native plants are naturally attractive to wildlife, with a few additional items your naturescape can become a bird and butterfly haven. The main components to a wildlife-friendly landscape are: food, cover, water, and a place to raise young.

Food: This one's easy. You are already providing food by planting native plants. If you want your plants to attract birds or butterflies just add that as a criteria when making your selections. You can also incorporate feeders* and other supplemental sources.

Cover: Mimic natural habitats by planting in layers. Using trees for the canopy, shrubs for an understory, and herbaceous plants for groundcover will provide habitat for a variety of wildlife. If your area is not large enough to include trees, choose shrubs that vary in height to create the same layered effect.

Water: Water features can include bird baths,* puddle areas for butterflies, or rain gardens (only provides temporary storage of water). (See "A Homeowner's Guide to Rain Gardens" for more information on incorporating a rain garden into your naturescape.) When providing a water supply, make sure to change the water a few times a week during warmer months to prevent mosquitoes from hatching. For a butterfly puddling area, include a rock in the water just a few inches deep for butterflies to land on.

A Place to Raise Young: Creating wildlife habitat is also about creating a place suitable for the entire life-cycle, from caterpillar to butterfly. Many wildlife features that serve as cover can double as a suitable place to raise young. Certain wildflowers can be ideal for butterflies and moths to lay eggs on; and trees, shrubs, or a birdhouse might be inviting enough for a song bird to stay and raise a family.

*Feeders and birdbaths should be cleaned regularly to prevent the spread of disease between birds. Disinfect your feeder and birdbath at least twice a month in a nine to one water and bleach solution to help keep your backyard guests disease free. Rinse thoroughly before refilling with seed or water.

Native Plants

You can use the following chart to help you get started naturescaping. Please keep in mind it is not a complete list of plants and some plants may be more difficult to find than others. Call or visit local nurseries to check on availability before making final decisions.

Name	Light	Soil	Evergreen	Deciduous	Flowering	Notes
Bigleaf Maple	Full to partial sun	Moist		X		Fast growing, large tree
Cascara	Full to partial sun	Moist to dry		X	X	Small, erect tree, tends to favor southern facing aspects
Douglas Fir	Full to partial sun	Moist	X			Fast growing, very large tree
Oregon White Oak	Full sun	Dry		X		Slow growing to 80 feet
Red Alder	Full sun	Wet to moist		X		Fast growing to 80 feet
Western Hemlock	Full to partial sun	Moist	X			Moderately growing to 200 feet
Western Red Cedar	Sun to shade	Moist	X			Moderately growing to 200 feet
Western Serviceberry	Full sun	Moist to dry		X	X	Small tree/large shrub to 10 feet, berries attract songbirds
Blue Elderberry	Full to partial sun	Moist to dry		X	X	Small tree/large shrub to 20 feet, leaves, stems and green berries toxic to humans if
Douglas Spirea	Full to partial sun	Wet to moist		X	X	Spreads, attracts butterflies provides dense habitat
Evergreen Huckleberry	Full to partial sun	Moist	X		X	Slow growing to 13 feet, berries attract songbirds
Indian Plum	Sun to shade	Moist		X	X	Spreads, up to 16 feet tall, early spring blooms, fruit

Kinnikinnick	Full to partial sun	Dry	X	X	Spreads, berries attract some birds
Mock Orange	Full to partial sun	Moist to dry		X	Showy, aromatic flowers
Ocean Spray	Full to partial sun	Moist to dry		X	
Oregon Grape	Full sun	Moist	X	X	Spreads, berries attract birds
Pacific Ninebark	Full to partial sun	Wet to moist		X	Spreads, attracts butterflies seeds provide food for birds
Red-flowering Currant	Full sun	Moist to dry		X	Spreads, flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies
Red Huckleberry	Partial sun	Moist		X	Berries attract songbirds
Red Osier Dogwood	Full to partial sun	Wet to moist		X	Thicket-forming shrub that grows quickly to 10 feet, excellent cover for wildlife
Salal	Full to partial sun	Moist to dry	X	X	Thicket-forming, excellent cover for wildlife
Snowberry	Sun to shade	Moist to dry		X	Berries attract birds, but are mildly poisonous to humans
Swamp Rose	Sun to shade	Wet to moist		X	Spreads, flower attract birds
Vine Maple	Full to partial sun	Moist		X	Spreads, showy fall foliage

Bleeding Heart	Full to partial sun	Moist			X	X	Spreads, up to 1.5 feet tall
Bunchberry	Full to partial sun	Moist	X			X	Low and trailing
Deer Fern	Partial sun to shade	Wet to moist	X				
False Lily-of-the-Valley	Partial sun to shade	Moist			X	X	Up to 15 inches tall, lightly fragrant, flowers and berries
Lady Fern	Sun to shade	Wet to moist			X		Spreads, fast growing
Maidenhair Fern	Sun to shade	Wet to moist			X		Spreads
Oregon Stonecrop	Full sun	Dry	X			X	Spreads, fast growing, needs well-drained soil
Oxalis	Partial sun	Moist			X	X	Spreads
Sword Fern	Sun/shade	Moist/dry	X				Spreads
Waterleaf	Full to partial sun	Moist			X	X	Spreads
Wild Ginger	Partial sun to shade	Moist	X				Spreads
Blue Wildrye	Full to partial sun	Dry	X				Fast spreading bunchgrass, tall-up to 3 feet, excellent erosion control
Sleder Hairgrass	Partial Sun	Moist	X				1-4 feet tall bunchgrass, excellent erosion control
Spike Bentgrass	Full sun	Moist	X				Spreads, 1-4 feet tall
Western Fescue Grass	Partial sun	Dry	X				Spreads





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