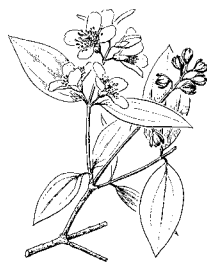


LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVE PLANTS

By **Tonie Fitzgerald, WSU Extension Agent, Spokane County**



Mock Orange

Landscaping with native plants is definitely in vogue—and for good reason. Less formal looking natural landscapes, once established, require less watering, mowing and pruning chores. That means less work for busy people. Once they are established, native plants generally need less water and fertilizer than non-native ones. However, there are many non-native landscape plants that are quite well adapted to this area. These adapted plants, though they originated in a different area of the world, are hardy to Zone 5 (30 degrees below zero F) and can withstand our hot, dry summers.

Landscaping with native and adapted plants is referred to as “naturalized landscaping.” But natural landscapes don’t just happen by letting things go. Natural landscapes need to be designed, planted and managed. If you are devoting an entire yard or garden area to natives, you’ll probably have to work at removing what’s already there before establishing native plant communities. More likely you will be incorporating some native plants into existing landscapes. The most important thing to keep in mind is to **PUT THE RIGHT PLANT IN THE RIGHT PLACE**. If plants grow naturally in full sun and gravelly well-drained soil, that’s the kind of place they need to be in your yard. Conversely, if plants in the wild are woodland types that live in filtered light and organic soil, they need those conditions in your yard. While it is possible to modify existing site conditions somewhat with soil amendments it is impractical to attempt this in very large areas. It is best to choose plants to fit the site.

If you are combining natives with other landscape plants, be sure to keep plants with similar water and soil requirements together. If dry loving native plants (xeriphytes) are mixed in with plants that require even moderate watering, the natives are likely to get root rot or sucker profusely and spread aggressively. Do not mix them with plants that need more water or soil fertility or you have defeated the purpose of using native plants.

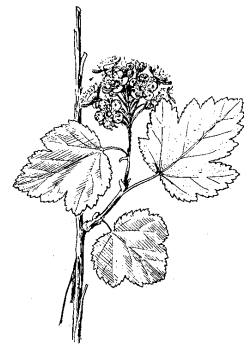
Native plants in retail nurseries may look a little different from other nursery stock. Because they are grown locally, they may not be leafed out or flowering at the time of sale like plants raised in western Washington or Oregon nurseries. Don't balk at purchasing these undeveloped plants though. The optimum time for planting anything is before it leafs out. Native plants are generally available in one, two or five gallon pots. Some trees may come in larger pot sizes. Some are bareroot. Some seedlings come in tubes or plugs an inch or two in diameter and about eight inches long. (They are grown in plugs when large numbers are needed for reclamation projects.)



Snowberry



Smooth Sumac



Ninebark