

'Grow Native' will be credo for many planting projects: Join in!

With a nod to the tireless efforts of many concerned area residents who make up the Native Plants Advisory Group, Bonner County will participate in the efforts to encourage the use of native plants in future seeding, planting and renovating projects.

This is happy news, because although many non-native trees, ornamentals, shrubs and grasses can be beautiful and accessible, often non-hardy, invasive or even noxious plants can crop up and take over to the detriment of native flora before it's realized.

Natives, however, have everything going for them. They offer beauty, color, versatility, environmental usefulness, watershed protection, and most of all, hardiness, thriving in our often adverse climate. As a new member of the group, I have offered to present frequent articles in this column, pointing out the many favorable aspects of "Growing Native."

There are myriad native plants to choose from for whatever landscape purpose, from shade providers, flowers, grasses and even groundcover, and their common denominator is "carefree." Natives neither want nor need fertilizers, enhanced soil mixtures, or even special winter care. They survive drought, rain, cold, heat, and other conditions that wither, drown, freeze or burn non-natives. Too, they help



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to restore lost wildlife habitat to the area, are simple to maintain (thus saving considerable money) and ultimately attract more birds and beneficial insects to the urban and private landscape

by virtue of their bonus of food, water, shelter, and reproductive cover.

Evergreens seem naturally to come to mind with Christmas close at hand. The perfect choice for background, hardy and beautiful, their very presence is cheering. Be it pine, spruce, fir, hemlock or juniper, in any of a myriad shades of green to blue-green, it's that rich color that makes the day seem a bit brighter. As a backdrop for deciduous species, they contribute to the glorious color arrangements of fall foliage that is possible.

Grand (White) Fir (the lovely traditional flat-needled "Christmas tree,") grown in small clusters or groves are beautiful, fragrant and grow happily most anywhere. Sub alpine Fir, a compact beauty, seems to accept life at lower

elevations nicely, and is an asset to any property. Either of these are exceptional in the landscape. Douglas, or Red Fir often grows to huge size, as do Western Red Cedar and Western Hemlock, but any of these three beauties grace large sites of an acre or more.

Englemann Spruce and White Spruce, both generally found at mid to high elevations, narrow, compact and densely needled, are coveted landscape additions, as is Rocky Mountain Juniper, a rare beauty with its sometimes gnarled appearance and pretty

dusty blue berries.

Though a bone of contention in many environmental conversations over the years, the Colorado (Blue) Spruce, while not considered a true native, has become an established part of the wilderness throughout the Inland Northwest for well over a century. It's beauty and hardiness equals the true natives, however, and though the purist might not opt for one, if it shows up in your landscape, it would hopefully be welcomed and accepted.

When one thinks of evergreens, it's generally of the afore-mentioned needed species. However, there are other wintertime cheerer-uppers which are the broadleaf evergreens. These include native shrubs and groundcovers like Kinnickinnick (Bearberry), Pachistima (Mountain Lover or Boxwood), Oregon Grape, Ceanothus — (shiny-leaved "deer brush," beloved of

moose), and Prince's Pine.

Many ferns, nestled among rocky sites, stay green throughout the winter; the native (but less beloved) Bracken fern however, turns brown and must be pulled (early spring is the best time for this). With the exception of the ferns, many of the evergreens mentioned provide much-needed food for birds — cone-seeds and/or berries — as well as shelter.

Often, persons balk at growing native, citing lack of color and the beauty offered by cultivars. Next time, this article will point out the error of such thinking with some bright native examples.

Next Week: The Chef continues holiday baking.



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3	7	9	6	1	2	4	5	8
5	4	1	9	8	7	6	2	3
1	8	5	3	9	4	2	6	7
7	9	6	5	2	1	8	3	4
4	3	2	7	6	8	1	9	5
9	2	3	8	4	6	5	7	1
8	1	7	2	5	9	3	4	6
6	5	4	1	7	3	9	8	2

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