

SPRING
2021

Native Plant Spotlight:



Photo By/More info: www.nwplants.com

Tall Oregon Grape

(*Mahonia* [*Berberis*] *aquifolium*)
Flowers appear March-May
A great plant for pollinators!

Native Plant

Gardening/Wildlife Habitat:

Our Oregon State Flower flourishes in sun or shade and is highly drought tolerant: perfect for the northwest.

It is an evergreen shrub so it looks great all year long! After the lovely yellow flower clusters have gone by, true blue berries will take their place.

Birds and small wildlife are attracted to these berries but they'll usually leave enough for you to admire. The contrast between the blue fruits and the glossy green foliage is picture perfect. Its leaves will bronze in the winter, only to green up again when spring comes round.

Use this plant for hedges, borders and drifts. They grow quickly and make a great fence!

The Columbia SWCD Presents:

THE DIRT

LESS WEEDS, MORE FISH

In April of 2020, the Columbia SWCD received funding through the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) for a small grant project on two properties along McNulty Creek in St. Helens. The goal of the project is to restore native vegetation to the riparian area translating into positive impacts for wildlife, water quality, and streambank stability. Streambanks along both properties had been taken over by noxious weeds (invasive, non-native plant species), including Himalayan blackberries, English ivy, English holly, Yellow archangel, Shiny geranium, Reed canary grass, and Italian arum. The displacement of native riparian plants by noxious weeds is a common problem throughout all watersheds in our County. The spread of noxious weeds to sensitive and important ecological areas such as streambanks pose a significant threat to local wildlife and the environment in general. Noxious weeds reduce biological diversity, crowd out native species that provide food and habitat for wildlife, destabilize streambanks, and diminish water quality.

The SWCD hired a contractor to remove and treat the weeds in the Summer and Fall of 2020. In November of 2020, native plants were purchased from the Scappoose Bay Watershed Council and planted throughout the riparian areas and in upland areas where one of the landowners had been working very hard to remove English ivy around mature conifer trees. Some of the native plants used were Big leaf maple, willows, red elderberry, salal, Oregon grape, and sword fern. Replacement of non-native, invasive plants with a diversity of well-suited native plants will have many long term benefits for the watershed including enhanced habitat



Before: Invasive Shiny geranium had taken over this section of the streambank



After: Same section of streambank repopulated with native plants including sword ferns and rushes

GET INVOLVED

Local Board Meetings:

Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District:
 3rd Wed. of the month at 4:00 p.m. at their office in Saint Helens

Scappoose Bay Watershed Council:
 1st Tue. of the month at 7:00 p.m. at their office in Scappoose

Lower Columbia River Watershed Council:
 2nd Tue. of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the Clatskanie PUD office

Upper Nehalem Watershed Council:
 4th Thur. of the month at 7:00 p.m. at Vernonia High School

CSWCD STAFF

District Manager
 Nathan Herr

Financial Manager
 Malysa Legg

Senior Resource Conservationist
 Selene Keeney

Resource Conservationist
 Crystalyn Bush

Riparian Specialist
 Amber Kester

Outreach Coordinator
 Jennifer Chavez

NRCS STAFF

District Conservationist
 Hannah Isaacs

Program Support Tech
 Dee Robinson

Organic & Small Farm Specialist
 Stacey Cooper

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INTERESTING UPCOMING EVENTS

04/03/21 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm: Friends of Nob Hill Work Party; Nob Hill Nature Park, St. Helens
 Nob Hill Nature Park is an oak woodland overlooking the Columbia River. Meet at Park Entrance 451 Plymouth St, at city's water treatment plant. Wear long pants, long sleeves, and bring rain gear. Work party goes on, rain or shine. Also, please bring your own water, gloves and hand tools for weeding. Masks and social-distancing required. This is a free event, open to the public; all are welcome.

04/10/21 9:00 am - 12:00 pm SBWC Native Plant Sale; Behind Scappoose High School
 Scappoose Bay Watershed Council is holding their Spring native plant sale. Offering a large and diverse selection of native plants, there is something for every type of property. More information: www.scappoosebay-wc.org

04/27/21 6:00 pm Intro to Beekeeping; Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District
 Join experts from Bee & Bloom as they introduce attendees to the world of beekeeping! In this free webinar they will discuss bee biology, beekeeping equipment, how to set up your hives, and where you can find more information about beekeeping. More information: <https://tualatinswcd.org/event/introduction-to-beekeeping/>

04/30/21–5/03/21 City Nature Challenge: Greater Portland-Vancouver Metro Area; iNaturalist

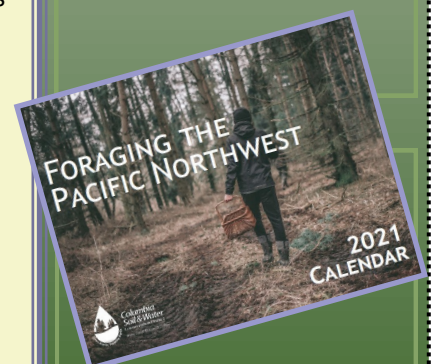
The City Nature Challenge is a global bioblitz - an effort to find and document as many plants and wildlife as possible in a short time period. The City Nature Challenge happens in two parts. You can participate in just one or both:

- Friday, April 30 - Monday, May 3: collect observations on iNaturalist.
- Friday, April 30 - Sunday, May 9: help identify others' observations on iNaturalist.
- Total species and observation counts will be announced on Monday, May 10.

More information: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2021-greater-portland-vancouver-metro-area>

Connect with us to see what we're up to by following us on Facebook and Instagram!

@Columbiaswcd



Did you receive our 2021 Calendar? If not, it isn't too late to pick one up! Contact our office to schedule a time to get yours before they're gone!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

for all local wildlife, increased stream shading, improved water quality, and better long-term stability for the stream bank through the establishment of deep and complex root structures. A diverse plant community will also attract valuable pollinator and insect species which provide the foundation for healthy populations of all wildlife species, including aquatic species like salmon.

In December, one of the landowners involved in this project shared photos and videos of migrating Coho Salmon in



Native plants ready to go in the ground!



Before (left): Invasive Italian arum had spread from the landowner's garden into the riparian area. **After (right):** Landowners worked diligently to remove the Italian arum. The efforts in combination with herbicide treatments and the planting in Fall 2020 are transforming this stretch of McNulty Creek into a haven for local wildlife.

McNulty Creek taken from their backyard. This happy sighting gives extra purpose to our efforts and collaboration with these property owners. We look forward to continuing our work on McNulty Creek and monitoring the transformation for years to come. The Columbia SWCD is honored to work with and support local landowners looking to restore and protect natural resources on their land. If you are interested or have questions regarding our Small Grant Program, please contact our office to speak with our Resource Conservationist, Crystalyn Bush or our Riparian Specialist, Amber Kester.

Garden Gab

Gardening tip from the SWCD: "Starts from Cuttings": "You don't always need seeds to get growing. Did you know that some plants can be started from cuttings of parent plants? Plants that do this well tend to have woodier stems. A lot of herbs like Oregano, Rosemary, Thyme and others can be started from cuttings. Just clip off the last 6" or more of a stem, scrape leaves and hairs off the bottom 1/3 of your cutting, clip off any flowers, and stick the cutting into the soil about 1/3 of the way. Then just water like normal. Using a rooting hormone can increase your chance of success, but is not always necessary."

-Crystalyn Bush, Resource Conservationist

Feel like sharing? Post photos of your garden greatness on our Facebook page and share tips with other growers!

Seed Outdoors

March: Arugula*, Asian greens**, Asparagus* (crown), Chard*, Fava Beans, Garlic (cloves), Kale, Mustard greens*, Peas*, Scallions**, Spinach**

April: Beets*, Broccoli*, Cabbage (early types)*, Carrots*, Cauliflower*, Celeriac*, Celery*, Chard*, Choi*, Cilantro*, Dill, Endive*, Fennel (bulbing), Jerusalem Artichoke* (tuber), Kohlrabi*, Lettuce*, Radicchio, Radish, Sorrel, Turnips*

May: Basil, Beans*, Bruss. sprouts*, Cabbage, Collards*, Dill, Fennel (bulbing), Leeks (over wintering), Parsnips*, Potatoes* (tubers), Pumpkin, Radicchio, Radish, Rutabaga, Salad greens, Squash

Seed Indoor

March: Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Celery, Eggplant*, Leeks, Lettuce, Peppers*, Scallions, Tomatoes*, Tomatillos*

April: LATE APRIL- Basil, Cucumber, Melon, Pumpkin, Squash

May: Basil, Cucumber, Melon

* Indicates best times and methods of planting

** Indicates plant may be seeded outdoors during any of the three months listed.

(Information obtained from Portland Nursery's veggie calendar at <http://portlandnursery.com>. Check it out for more detailed information about best planting times and methods.)

Welcome, Amber!

Amber was hired as the District's new Riparian Specialist in October of 2020. For the past 7 years she worked as the watershed technician and manager of the native plant nursery for the Scappoose Bay Watershed Council. Amber oversees the District's small grant projects, noxious weed program, and provides technical assistance to local landowners. She is excited to join the District where she can use her knowledge of the local environment to assist landowners throughout the county make positive changes to their land. In her off time, Amber loves exploring nature with her husband, two children and dog camping, hiking, kayaking, and riding their motorcycles.



Earth Day: April 22, 2021

The theme for this year's Earth Day from earthday.org is Restore Our Earth, which focuses on natural processes (the interactions among plants, animals, and the environment: Interactions include pollination, photosynthesis, etc.), emerging green technologies, and innovative thinking that can restore the world's ecosystems. It is up to each of us to Restore Our Earth. We need a healthy Earth to support our jobs, livelihoods, health & survival, and happiness.

According to earthday.org, more than 1 billion people in 192 countries now participate in Earth Day activities each year. Though it may be tough to find local events during this time, we invite you to be a part of Earth Day in any way you can. Below are some "social-distancing" friendly Earth Day activities you can do everyday of the week to help raise awareness for conservation.

Family Activities for Conservation Awareness:

1. **Nature Hike:** Throw on some sturdy shoes and get outside! Show support for the environment and carry along a trash bag and gloves and clean up any garbage you see. Want to have some fun and incorporate some school work? Make a scavenger hunt with things you might pass along your walk. Bring your camera and have your child(ren) take a picture of each item they find!
2. **Soil Your Undies:** This is one of the coolest projects you'll see for soil testing! Want to know how healthy your soil is? Grab a new pair of 100% cotton underwear, find a spot in your backyard, and bury it about 3" down. Don't forget where you buried them! In 60 days, dig them back up and see how they weathered. If they're falling apart and broken down to almost nothing, your soil is great. If there is little to no change in the underwear, the soil isn't so great. The microbes in the soil are what consumes the cotton. Happy soil microbes give you the best product! Find out more information about this activity [here](#).
3. **Bug Hotel:** For a fun experiment outdoors, make a bug hotel out of natural and recycled materials. Grab a wooden box, plastic bottle, or old shelf you're ready to throw out, and fill it with natural materials to make a home for beneficial insects. Bug hotels promote biodiversity, which is essential for a healthy ecosystem. Hotels can also reduce the need for chemical pesticides, as it weeds out problem insects, and provides a habitat for pollinators necessary for a successful garden. Make sure to research what beneficial insects you'd like attract. Different insects prefer to live in different conditions and areas. Check on it periodically to see what you've attracted!

You can find more STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) games and activities through Google by searching for "outdoor conservation activities". We hope you all are making the best out of these times. Happy Earth Day!

