Disclaimer

This identification booklet is a collection of 42 plants that grow in the Pacific Northwest region. You’ll see that there is a combination of native and invasive plants, and we encourage you to discuss or think about the impacts these plants could have on your local ecosystem.

Though you may read in this booklet that some plants are edible, please do NOT eat anything that has not been verified by an expert. If consumed, some plants can cause adverse reactions.

Thank you and happy investigating!

This booklet was intended to be used with the student Habitat Investigation activity to fill out the plant identification section.

Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association
3057 E Bakerview Rd,
Bellingham, WA 98226
https://www.n-sea.org/
(360) 715-0283
### Western Red Cedar

*Thuja plicata*

**Native**

- Cedars are long-lived and can grow to be over 150 feet tall to provide shade.
- Crush a few needles between your fingertips and smell the cedar’s sweet scent.
- Native peoples of the Pacific Northwest called it the “tree of life” because it provided them with so many supplies.

### Douglas Fir

*Pseudotsuga menziesii*

**Native**

- Smell and feel the soft needles that make excellent shelter for birds.
- Can live to be over 1,000 years old!
- The wood of a Douglas Fir is thought to make excellent fire tongs, since it is fire resistant. It is also used to make fishing hooks for halibut and cod.
- A popular Christmas tree

### Sitka Spruce

*Picea sitchensis*

**Native**

- Squirrels feed on the cones of Sitka!
- An easy way to remember how to tell the spruce from other evergreen trees is by reciting this saying: “spruces are spiky, firs are friendly.”
- The Makah used spruce to make baskets and rain hats while the Tlingit peoples used the inner bark for food and was often dried into cakes along with berries.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tree Type</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Native Status</th>
<th>Key Characteristics</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Western Hemlock   | *Tsuga heterophylla* | Native       | - Grows well in shade, but has shallow roots and thin bark, making it helpless against high winds and forest fires.  
                  |                 |               | - Can reach up to 200 feet and grow to be over 1,000 years old.  
                  |                 |               | - Native American legend says that Coyote put a curse on the mighty hemlock tree so that it was always bowing. |
| Shore Pine        | *Pinus contorta*  | Native        | - Birds love to eat the small pine nuts that it produces!  
                  |                 |               | - Grows in wet soils that drain well.  
                  |                 |               | - Can grow straight like a pole or crooked and bent by the wind.  
                  |                 |               | - Native people used the sap to waterproof their boats. The bark was often used medicinally by various tribes. |
| Grand Fir         | *Abies grandis*   | Native        | - A grand fir has flat, rounded, dark green needles.  
                  |                 |               | - Has thin bark, making it sensitive to forest fires.  
                  |                 |               | - Named “grand” because of the great height and size it can reach (reaching as high as 240 feet tall), making it a very important source of shade for streams. |
Vine Maple
_Acer circinatum_
_Native_
- Likes growing in shade.
- Insects falling from the leaves provide fresh food for fish.
- The far-reaching root system helps hold the stream banks in place.
- The Quinault people called it the “basket tree” because the long straight shoots of the vine maple were often used to weave.

Paper Birch
_Betula papyrifera_
_Native_
- Grows well in moist soils and full sun.
- Has a shallow root system just below the surface of the ground.
- Native peoples used the water-proof bark to make baskets and canoes. The bark was also used as fuel, and the sap and inner bark was used as an emergency food supply.

Red Alder
_Alnus rubra_
_Native_
- Fast growing species, often the first tree species to move into an area after a disturbance such as a forest fire.
- Roots put nutrients into the soil, enriching it for the next trees to follow.
- Alder trees are a common nest tree for great blue herons.
- Native people use the red alder to make bowls, masks, rattles, and red dyes.
Sitka Willow

*Salix sitchensis*

**Native**

- Willows grow in moist soils along and their thick, tangled root systems hold soils in place and prevent erosion.
- Cut branches called “live stakes” can be re-planted into moist soil and will root to start a new plant.
- Native northwest peoples made rope for fishing nets out of the branches.

Big Leaf Maple

*Acer macrophyllum*

**Native**

- Leaves can get bigger than your head!
- Mosses, lichens, ferns grow on the bark of these trees.
- “Helicopter” fruits provide food for squirrels and birds.
- Helps holds stream banks with strong, large root systems.
- A good source of large woody debris.

Black Cottonwood

*Populus trichocarpa*

**Native**

- The fluffy cotton surrounding the seeds enables them to spread and sprout far and wide.
- Grow quickly (up to 5 feet a year!), up to 180 feet tall in the riparian zone, making it the tallest broad-leaf tree in North America.
- Provides cover and nesting habitat for birds, including woodpeckers.
| **Pacific Ninebark**  
*Physocarpus capitatus*  
Native |
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The tangling wiry branches make great hide-outs in which small birds can nest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Grows well in moist soils and beavers don’t like to eat them!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Native people made children’s bows and knitting needles out of Ninebark branches. The plant was also sometimes used to heal sores.</td>
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| **Nootka Rose**  
*Rosa mutkana*  
Native |
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<tr>
<td>• The fruit provides important source of vitamin C in fall and winter to deer and many birds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tiny thorns protect from deer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Native Americans used bark and stems to make an eye-wash for healing and improving eyesight. Chewed leaves were also applied to bee stings for healing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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| **Red-Osier Dogwood**  
*Cormus sericea*  
Native |
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<tr>
<td>• The tangled scarlet red stems and crowded root systems hold together stream banks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clusters of white flowers produced in the spring turn into white berries in the summer that provide important winter food for birds, ducks, elk, moose, and deer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The branches were used for basket rims.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Pacific Rhododendron**  
  *Rhododendron Macrophyllum*  
  **Native** |
| --- |
| • Can grow anywhere from 5 to 25 ft tall.  
• Rhododendrons are one of Washington’s showiest flowers, they grow in clusters and can come in a variety of colors.  
• All parts of this plant contain poisonous substances and are considered toxic. |

| **Ocean Spray**  
  *Holodiscus discolor*  
  **Native** |
| --- |
| • Attracts butterflies and other pollinators with its sweet fragrance.  
• Also called creambush because of its 5 inch long cream flowers which are present from June to August.  
• The strong wood has historically been used to make furniture and tools such as spears and nails. |

| **Red Flowering Currant**  
  *Ribes sanguineum*  
  **Native** |
| --- |
| • Likes growing in recently disturbed areas.  
• Pink to scarlet colored flowers attract hummingbirds and ripen into round blue-black berries.  
• The Native Americans in the area ate the berries of the Red-Flowering Currant, but they are not very tasty and were only eaten fresh. |
**Red Huckleberry**

*Vaccinium parvifolium*

Native

- Often grows out of decaying logs or “nurse logs” in partial shade.
- The leaves and berries are food for deer, bears, raccoons, chipmunks, and birds.
- Native tribes dried the berries or put them in cakes.
- The berries resemble salmon eggs and were used as bait in streams to catch fish.

**Evergreen Huckleberry**

*Vaccinium ovatum*

Native

- Can grow up to 12 feet tall in the shade but only about 4 feet tall in the sun.
- Grows into a natural hedge.
- According to legend, the berries are sweeter after the first frost.
- The flowers attract hummingbirds and other pollinators.

**Stinging Nettle**

*Urtica dioica*

Native

- When touched, the leaves exude formic acid which can lead to a small bumpy rash.
- Sword fern spores can be rubbed on the skin to treat the rash.
- The leaves can be eaten or drank after cooking, and are used in teas and stews.
- They are rich in iron and vitamin C.
| **Osoberry**  
*Oemleria cerasiformis*  
**Native** |  
- One of the first shrubs to flower in the spring (as early as February), seen as a sign that spring is here!  
- Berries are eaten fresh, cooked, or dried by several Indigenous Salish groups.  
- Crush up the leaf to sense the cucumber smell. |
| **Salmonberry**  
*Rubus spectabilis*  
**Native** |  
- Look at the small pink blossoms that turn to red/orange berries in early spring.  
- These green berries ripen red.  
- The name salmonberry comes from the Native peoples who ate the berries with salmon. These tasty berries were historically a very important food source for people in this area. |
| **Thimbleberry**  
*Rubus parviflorus*  
**Native** |  
- Feel the fuzzy, soft surface of maple-leaf shaped leaves.  
- White flowers change into dark red thimble-shaped fruits.  
- Likes to grow in open sunny areas, stream sides are perfect.  
- Soft, broad leaves make excellent natural toilet paper for campers! |
**Twinberry**  
*Lonicera involucrata*  
Native

- Birds love to eat the berries, but people consider them inedible.
- Attracts insects!
- Berries are used by Northwest coast peoples because they are bitter and inedible. The Haida people historically rubbed twin berries on their heads to keep their hair from turning grey!

**Oregon Grape**  
*Mahonia aquifolium*  
Native

- Berries attract birds.
- Leaves are shiny, leathery, and spiky like holly leaves.
- Shrubs will grow to be 3 feet tall.
- The yellow flowers are the Oregon State flower.
- Shredded bark and berries are used to make dye.

**Cascara**  
*Rhamnus purshiana*  
Native

- Shrub grows up to 30 feet tall and provides great habitat for birds in the riparian zone.
- Will grow in wet sites and strong roots will help in holding the stream bank in place.
- Feel the smooth, deeply veined leaves and silver-gray bark.
**Snowberry**  
*Symphoricarpos*  
Native

- Berries grow on this shrub well into the winter season and are eaten by birds, but are poisonous to humans.
- Thick tangled root systems hold dirt in place so it does not run into the stream.
- People of the Chehalis tribe used to rub the berries on their hair as soap.

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**Trailing Blackberry**  
*Rubus ursinus*  
Native

- A common ground cover in open forests.
- Trailing blackberry is the only native blackberry to this region.
- The fresh berries were harvested in July and eaten immediately or dried for winter storage. The leaves were added to bitter medicines to sweeten the flavor.

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**Salal**  
*Gaultheria shallon*  
Native

- White flowers turn into dark blue/purple berries.
- Berries provide food for birds.
- Forms a thick ground cover along streams making great habitat for animals.
- The berries were often used to sweeten other foods (like sugar). Today, salal berries are more commonly used for making jams or preserves.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Licorice Fern</strong></th>
<th>Polypodium glycyrrhiza</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Native</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• These ferns love to grow on the mossy bark of native trees.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The rhizomes (underground stems) are edible and taste sweet!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Licorice ferns come out in the winter when the rainy season brings the mosses back to life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sword Fern</strong></th>
<th>Polystichum munitum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Native</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Caterpillars love to eat these, which is good for salmon because caterpillars that fall into the stream are food!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This fern is tough and stays green all winter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• These ferns were also used as a protective layer in pit ovens, for flooring, and for bedding.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Bracken Fern</strong></th>
<th>Pteridium spp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Native</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• These ferns are found on every continent besides Antarctica!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When fronds emerge in spring, the tender stalks are known as fiddleheads which some consider a tasty treat when cooked.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bracken fern is poisonous to cattle, sheep, and horses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Morning Glory
*Ipomoea*

**Invasive**

- Morning Glory flowers open in the morning and close in the afternoon.
- Is a vine that can grow over 15ft tall in one season.
- Became invasive when many people planted them in their gardens.
- Is perennial, which means it will come back every year.

### Scotch Broom
*Cytisus scoparius*

**Invasive**

- These plants were native to Europe and brought here to North America when the land was settled.
- Grows in sunny open locations and prevents native plants from growing.
- Scotch Broom was used for holding soil in place on banks but spreads so quickly to other areas people now avoid using it.

### Creeping Buttercup
*Ranunculus repens*

**Invasive**

- Buttercup is poisonous for humans or animals to eat.
- Likes to grow in Riparian Zones all over the world.
- Creeping Buttercup is native to Europe.
- Is allelopathic, meaning it can poison plants around it.
- Buttercup can grow new plants from just a piece of stem.
Thistle
Cirsium vulgare
Invasive

- Native to Europe, western Asia, and northwest Africa.
- Thistles are a favorite source of nectar for butterflies.
- They compete with crops and interfere with grazing pastures, some domestic animals can become sick after eating too much thistle.

Teasel
Dipsacus
Invasive

- First arrived in the US in the 1800s to be used in textiles.
- A single plant can make anywhere from 1 to 40 flowerheads, and each flowerhead, on average, produces 850 seeds.
- Originally from the temperate climates of Asia and Europe, Washington’s climate was an ideal fit for this weed.

Japanese Knotweed
Reynoutria japonica
Invasive

- Listed by the World Conservation Union as one of the world’s worst invasive species.
- Knotweed can be found in 39/50 states.
- This plant is resilient to cutting and will grow back from a single root. To remove successfully, all roots must be pulled.
- Young stems are edible and taste similar to sour rubarb.
### Himalayan Blackberry
*Rubus armeniacus*
**Invasive**
- This vine grows naturally in India and was brought to North America over 100 years ago.
- Vines do not provide streams with shade like other native plants and the roots do not help with bank stability.
- Grow fast and can take over native plants.

### English Holly
*Ilex aquifolium*
**Invasive**
- These plants are native to southern and central Europe.
- The red berries are toxic to humans but provide food for birds.
- Can grow to be 50ft tall and can shade native trees, preventing them from growing.
- People used holly trees for gardening.

### Reed Canary Grass
*Phalaris arundinacea*
**Invasive**
- Some reed canary grass is native to this area but the majority of what we see is a grass from Europe.
- Does best in full sun locations and can grow to be six feet tall!
- Will clog streams and slow the flow of water making it very hard for salmon to swim in slow, murky water.