

# Western Washington Plants for Birds

## Bitter Cherry

*Prunus emarginata*



Photo by Mick Thompson, Eastside Audubon

## Evening Grosbeak

*(Coccothraustes vespertinus)*

Male Evening grosbeaks are yellow and black birds, while females and immature birds are gray. Males also have a pale, ivory bill, while it is greenish-yellow in females.

These birds breed in mature coniferous forests during summer, when they feed on insect larva. In winter, they are somewhat irregular visitors; however, they gather in flocks and feed on buds, berries, and smaller fruits. Every few winters, they move far into the southern United States where they can be spotted at bird feeders. They are year-round residents in the Puget Sound area, but more likely to visit backyards during winter.

When eating cherries, they remove the fruit (not eating it) then crack and swallow the seed.



Photo by Donna Franklin, Washington Native Plant Society

## Bitter Cherry

This tree can grow from 20-50 feet tall. It produces small, white flowers in spring and a red, juicy “cherry” in late summer. This fruit is too bitter for people, but is loved by birds and many mammals. A variety of birds eat the fruit, and hummingbirds and other pollinators get nectar from the flowers. The tree also provides shelter and nesting sites for birds. Interestingly, the fruit is also eaten by slugs.

Bitter cherry thrives in loamy soil, in part shade to full sun, and adapts well to disturbed sites, so it can be used for erosion control. This tree is good for use in woodland gardens. In the wild, it is often found along streams. Although this tree grows quickly, it lives only 30-40 years, so plan accordingly.

Because of its red color, the bark was used by Native Americans in basket weaving. The other parts of the tree served various medicinal purposes.



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