

# Gardening with Indigenous Plants

Gardening with Indigenous plants will bring a range of benefits—including food, medicine, increased habitat and forage for Indigenous pollinators and birds—not to mention they are evolved for their environments, meaning less maintenance work for you once they are established.

## What are Indigenous plants?

Indigenous plants are plants who evolved over thousands (or millions) of years in the same region, making them well-adapted and resilient. By this definition, they were not brought by humans from another environment through means of mass transportation. The long history and evolution of these plants is closely related to the complex relationships they share with other plants, animals, and humans. All of these beings work together to create thriving ecosystems.



## Why are they important?

Indigenous plants are important for a variety of reasons—they are culturally important as food, medicine, and material, they provide food and habitat to insects and animals, and they play important roles in our ecosystems.

Indigenous plants have been stewarded by Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. These relationships have shaped the landscapes and biodiversity we see around us today. One example of these special relationships is Garry Oak meadows, which were established and maintained through controlled burnings by ƵSÁNEĆ and Ləkʷəŋən peoples. The Garry Oak meadows were intentionally created for hunting and plant cultivation of key crops such as Camas (KŁO,EL// qʷəłáʔalʔ). Seed saving practices have also ensured continued biodiversity as well as encouraging the passage of cultural knowledge from generation to generation. Plants themselves share knowledge with those who care for them. For ƵSÁNEĆ people, the blooming of Ocean Spray (KÁʔELĆ // q́éćəłłć) signals that it is time to start reefnet fishing for sockeye salmon.

Indigenous plants provide food for all living beings, as well as medicine, fiber, fuel, building materials, and shelter. Stinging nettle (ʔEX ʔEX // ćəsxćəx) can

be eaten, drunk as a tea, and its fiber is good for making nets. Stinging nettle is also the only plant that the Satyr Angelwing butterfly lays eggs. When Indigenous plants exist, so will the Indigenous insects who rely on them—which in turn will increase pollination of Indigenous and non-Indigenous food plants.

Indigenous plants also provide food sources for birds through berries, seeds, and associated insects. Be sure to plant a large number and diverse array to provide shelter for a multitude of living beings. It is recommended that at least 50% of your garden be Indigenous plants in order to draw in beneficial insects and animals.

Indigenous plants are a climate-conscious choice in your garden because they are adapted to their environments through the long process of evolution. Indigenous plants are better suited to handle climatic shifts and usually require less maintenance and watering than other plants. They don't need pesticides or synthetic fertilizers to grow, therefore they are an easy plant to care for once established. Like other perennial plants, native plants have vast root systems that protect soils from erosion and improve aeration and structure.

Finally, Indigenous plants come in a variety of shapes and colours, providing beauty for your garden throughout the seasons.



## Are Indigenous plant numbers declining?

Many Indigenous plant species have suffered significant population decline or devastatingly, total loss. This has occurred because of the combined effects of land development, climate change, and the introduction and spread of invasive species.

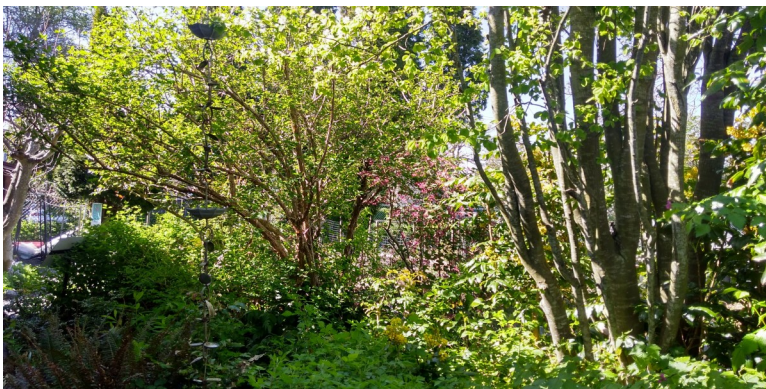
The loss and decline of Indigenous plants lessens genetic diversity and disrupts ecosystems making them more vulnerable to disturbance—which may be particularly impactful as climate change effects intensify. It also means fewer insects and pollination, which results in less food for humans and animals alike. Birds are especially vulnerable to decreases in insect populations, as their fledglings require a large amount of larvae to support their growing bodies.

## The threat of invasive plants

When introduced species arrive in new areas, they can become overly successful because they lack natural controls, such as pests and pathogens, that would normally keep their populations in check—and become invasive. In the case of native plants, they can be crowded or outcompeted by these new plants, thus reducing or eliminating their numbers and impacting the humans, insects and animals that rely on them, as well as the functioning of our ecosystems as a whole. Additionally, many invasives have shallow root systems that degrade soils, and the plants themselves may even affect soil biology, making it more difficult for Indigenous plants to reestablish themselves.

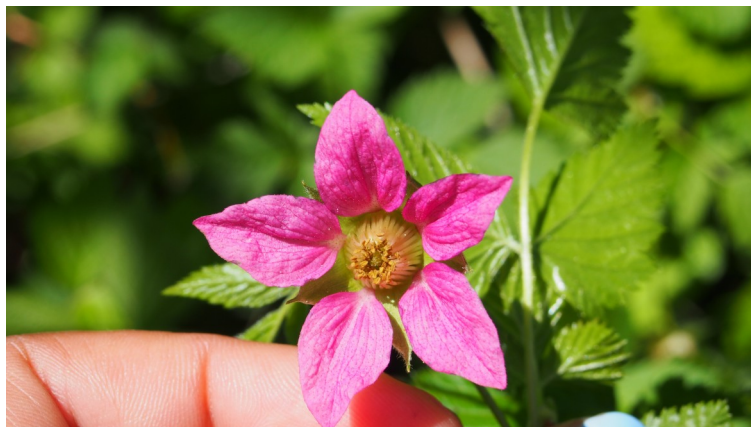
Check out [this resource](#) to recognize and deal with invasives that are causing significant issues in your area, and learn more about the impacts of invasives at [The Invasive Species Council of BC](#).

## The importance of leaving some behind



As previously mentioned, many insects and birds rely on native plants and need them in abundance to carry out their lifecycles and survive in months when food is less plentiful.

Once you have brought Indigenous plants into



your garden, they, along with your other plants, can be tended in ways that encourage bird and insect activity. Firstly, you can leave shriveled berries and seedheads on your food and flower plants for birds to eat up when they need. Consider delaying your spring garden clean-up until temperatures have consistently reached 10 for about 10 days, which signals the emergence of spring insects. If you are cleaning up and cutting back plants through the spring and summer, make sure to keep your eye out for cocoons and chrysalids. In the fall, cut spent seed heads but leave the stems for insects to make winter homes. Also leave leaf litter and old brush around for insects to nest in, or you can create a [bug snug](#) if you prefer a neater look to your garden (and enjoy the fun of building one!).

## Buy & Grow Indigenous Plants

There are many organizations and businesses in our area that you can buy Indigenous plants from which are listed below. We highly recommend checking out [Satinflower Nursery's website](#) which can help you choose Indigenous plants that are best suited to the light and soil conditions of your garden.

### Places to buy:

- [Swan Lake Annual Native Plant Sale](#)
  - presales every January-April
  - sale beginning of May
- [Satinflower Nurseries](#)
  - buy plants & seeds all year
  - many resources for planting available on their website and host workshops (use QR code)
- [Metchosin Farm](#)
  - available as seed
  - available at the farm, online, or at variety of stores throughout the CRD region (ex. Gardenworks)
- [The Compost Ed Center](#)
  - limited types
  - available at plant sales

# Native Plant Benefit Guide

The following native plants are all found on site at the Compost Education Centre and play different roles in supporting life in your garden. We did our best to include the SENĆOŦEN // ləkʷəŋəŋ names that we could find. We invite you to learn more about these Indigenous languages and their relationship to these plants and the lands we live on. Check out these websites for more information: <https://www.firstvoices.com/lekwungen> · <https://www.firstvoices.com/sencoten/>

## Legend



English Name (SENĆOŦEN // ləkʷəŋəŋ)	Ecological Benefits
Camas (KŁO,EL//qʷəʔáʔalʔ)	Seeds * Flowers
Candy Flower	Flowers
Coastal Sage	Fruits * Flowers
Cut leaf Blackberry (SKELÁLNĒWILĆ // sǫʷəlélŋəxʷ)	Fruits * Flowers
Evergreen Huckleberry (píxʷpəxʷ //)	Fruits * Flowers
Fawn Lily (SĆK,SEN //)	Flowers
Fringecup (TESIP //)	Flowers
Highbush Cranberry	Fruits * Flowers
Lupine	Seeds * Flowers
Ocean Spray (KÁŦELĆ // ǫ́ǫ́ǫ́ǫ́ǫ́)	Seeds * Flowers
Oregon Grape (SENI,ILĆ //)	Fruits * Flowers
Osoberry/June Plum (NIŁ E TFE ŦEXEN,ILĆ //)	Fruits * Flowers
Pacific Ninebark (TEŦEW JELĀ )	Seeds * Flowers
Red Flowering Currant (WÍWQ,ILĆ )	Fruits * Flowers
Salmonberry (ELILEILĆ // lílǫʷ)	Fruits * Flowers
Saskatoon berry (S,XÁSEMIILĆ)	Fruits * Flowers
Snowberry (PEPKIYOSILĆ)	Fruits * Flowers
Stinging Nettle (ŦEXŦEX // ǫ́sǫ́ǫ́ǫ́)	Seeds * Flowers
Strawberry (DILEK,ILĆ // ʔilǫ́ʷ)	Fruits * Flowers
Sword Fern (SŦXÁLEM // sǫ́lǫ́m)	
Trailing Blackberry (SKELÁLNĒWILĆ // sǫʷəlélŋəxʷ)	Fruits * Flowers
Western Trillium	Flowers
Wild Rose (KELKE,ŁĆ //)	Flowers
Yarrow (TELÍKEŁP //)	Seeds * Flowers

## Compost Education Centre

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