

Go Native!

By Jeannette Franks, PhD



What's so great about northwest natives? For one thing, our founding mother Cass Turnbull—she was the greatest. And I am a native too, as is Dominic Barrera, PlantAmnesty's hard-working director.

Signs of a true Northwesterner:

- No umbrella
- A one-season wardrobe
- Striding face up in all weather, rather than hunching against the wind and rain
- Judging weather by the sky, not the phone

Native plants are primo for 6 reasons:

- Since native plants evolved in this area, they survive our rainless (yes, rainless!) August and September
- Natives rarely require pruning and never need mowing
- You can tidy sword ferns by removing old fronds, but why do they look so gorgeous in the rainforest, when no one does anything to them?
- Salal and evergreen huckleberry branches are beautiful all year long and even stand up brilliantly in floral arrangements.
- Native plants provide ideal habitat for local birds, pollinators, and deer. If you plant enough natives, deer may never munch your roses!
- A dense, diverse understory of native plants hardly ever needs weeding, unless a silly robin poops some holly, ivy, or laurel seeds in your yard.

A judicious mix of cultivars and natives—right plant in the right place, of course— can make your aging garden easy to keep up and your aging body easier to maintain without aching shoulders, joints, and knees. Go native!