

Protecting Streams and Lakes with Native Plants

Guidelines for Landowner and Citizens in the Chambers – Clover Watershed of Pierce County

Landowners and citizens living along the shores of streams and lakes in the Chambers – Clover Watershed can help protect and even improve water quality in their watershed by selecting, planting, and caring for the right kinds of plants in riparian areas near shorelines.

Good reasons for planting natives:

1. Native plants shade waterways and reduce summer water temperatures – a growing concern in the face of climate change
2. Native plants stabilize shorelines and prevent erosion
3. Native plants can suppress the growth of some invasive plants such as yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), and Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*)

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4. Native plants support insect populations that are a food source for freshwater fishes, frogs, birds, and bats.
5. Native plants supply organic material (leaves and branches) that are part of the basis for freshwater food chains and sustain aquatic invertebrate animals
6. Native plants contribute coarse and large woody debris (CWD/LWD) that stabilize stream channels and provide habitat and cover for many aquatic animals
7. Native plants provide habitat and cover for many animals that live in riparian zones from birds to small mammals
8. Native plants are attractive!

For example, a tree such as red alder (*Alnus rubra*) provides ecological benefits by enhancing soil productivity through an association with nitrogen-fixing bacteria. As it grows taller, it provides shade and an understory environment for salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*), an early flowering plant important to hummingbirds and other pollinators. Alder branches and logs may fall into the stream and provide in-stream habitat for invertebrates and vertebrates alike. Alder leaves enter the stream each fall and, because of their higher nitrogen content and digestibility, are food for invertebrate animals.

Selected trees and shrubs

Red Alder (*Alnus rubra*)



A fast-growing deciduous tree well suited to disturbed sites. Height: Up to 80 feet (25 meters). Leaves deciduous.

Red-osier Dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*)



Spreading, thicket-forming shrub with bright red stems. Height: Up to 20 feet (6 meters). Leaves deciduous.

Pacific Ninebark (*Physocarpus capitatus*)



Erect to spreading shrub up to 4 meters tall with clusters of white flowers. Height: Up to 13 feet (4 meters). Leaves deciduous.

Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*)



Erect and branching shrub with early spring pink flowers and reddish-orange raspberry-like fruits. Height: Up to 13 feet (4 meters). Leaves deciduous.

Red Elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)



Shrub to small tree with clusters of small white flowers and red berries. Height: 20 feet (6 meters). Leaves deciduous.

Oregon Ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*)



Tough-wooded tree with gray bark and compound leaflets arranged oppositely around twigs. Up to 82 feet (25 meters) high. Leaves deciduous.

Resources

A more complete list of plants for freshwater shorelines and riparian areas plus many other habitats can be found on the **Washington Native Plant Society's** website:

<https://www.wnps.org/landscaping/herbarium/index.html>



For more information on what you can do to protect streams, lakes, and other freshwater places in our area, contact:

Pierce Conservation District
308 West Stewart Ave., P.O. Box 1057,
Puyallup, WA 98371; 253-845-9770

<http://www.piercecd.org/>

OR

Chambers – Clover Watershed Council
Tacoma Mall Plaza, 2702 S 42nd St. Suite
201, Tacoma, WA 98409; 253-798-6156

<http://www.piercecountywa.org/ccwc>



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