

Native Plant Spotlight by Krys Kirkwood

Physocarpus capitatus—Pacific Ninebark



This deciduous shrub can be found in wet, somewhat open places (streambanks, edges of moist woods, coastal marshes, meadows, margins of lakes and streams), occasionally can be found on drier, shrubby sites at low to middle elevations. Ninebark can grow 6-12 feet tall, with thin brown bark shredding into many layers on older wood. It's flowers are in a round snowball-like cluster that show up late spring-summer. Some native peoples used the wood to make children's bows and other small items, even knitting needles. Some tribes considered this shrub poisonous, but did use it for certain medicinal purposes. This species is called ninebark because it was believed there are

nine layers of shreddy bark on the stems. Ninebark can be used in the garden, but be aware of it's gangly growth nature. There are even miniature varieties available commercially.

Amelanchier alnifolia—Serviceberry, Saskatoon



Serviceberry is a deciduous shrub that grows 5-20 feet in height. It can be found along moist streambanks, rocky shorelines, meadows, thicket and forest edges, dry to moist open forest, scattered low to middle elevations. It often spreads by creeping roots, rhizomes and/or rooting branch ends; forming dense colonies of gray to reddish brown branched shrubs. It blooms around mid-spring with white flowers that are about 1 ¼ inches across, later the fruit appears a dull red turning purple-black as it ripens. The fruit is sweet; edible to moose, deer, elk, various birds, and humans. Native peoples highly regarded the berries, where they dried them into cakes for storage. Some natives

even practiced burning to encourage stands of serviceberry. Interior peoples used the wood for arrows, digging sticks, and drying racks. This shrub can be a wonderful addition to you home garden. There are several varieties available commercially.

I strongly urge leaving any of our native plants undisturbed. Enjoy them in their natural environment. Seek out nurseries and professionals who sell and/or deal with natives if you are wanting to add any to your garden.

- Photos: Krys Kirkwood
- Reference: Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast by Pojar and Mackinnon

Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest by Mark Turner and Phyllis Gustafson