



Forest Transplants: A Brief Introduction to Marketing Understory Plants from Small Private Forestlands in the Pacific Northwest

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Transplant Species from Pacific Northwest Forests

Trees

- Big Leaf Maple
- Red Alder
- Western Dogwood
- Red-Twig Dogwood
- Black Hawthorne
- Oregon Ash
- Western Crabapple
- Black Cottonwood
- Bitter Cherry
- Choke Cherry
- Cascara
- Blue Elderberry
- Red Elderberry

Shrubs

- Vine Maple
- Serviceberry
- Kinnickinnick
- Salal
- Oceanspray
- Dwarf Oregon Grape
- Tall Oregon Grape
- Pacific Rhododendron
- Western Azalea
- Red Currant
- Evergreen Huckleberry
- Red Huckleberry

Perennials

- Bear Grass
- False Lily of the Valley
- False Solomon Seal
- Western Wake Robin
- Western Yarrow
- Wild Ginger
- Wild Strawberry
- Wood Sorrel

Ferns

- Maidenhair Fern
- Lady Fern
- Deer Fern
- Licorice Fern
- Western Sword Fern

Overview

Forest landowners who actively manage their land have likely purchased conifer and other seedlings grown in nurseries for planting (for example, for afforestation, reforestation, erosion control, habitat improvement, riparian management, or watershed enhancement). However, naturally occurring plants found

on forest lands can also serve as a source of seeds, seedlings, and mature transplants that can be sold to nurseries or directly to consumers for landscaping purposes. This factsheet provides a brief introduction to marketing transplants (also known as “wildlings”) as a potential source of supplemental income for small forestland owners and harvesters. It briefly describes species with commercial value, transplanting techniques, and markets for these plants.



Swordfern is hardy and transplants easily.

Understory Plants with Commercial Value as Transplants

There is a strong and growing interest in native plants for residential/commercial landscaping and restoration projects because of their natural beauty, hardiness to local climate conditions and soils, low maintenance requirements, and attractiveness to wildlife. Although many native transplants are cultivated on farms for the nursery industry, small private forestland owners can also tap into the market by transplanting plants that naturally grow on their land. Landowners can take advantage of areas that are destined to be logged or cleared by potting understory species with commercial value that would otherwise be trampled, burned, or destroyed. Even in areas where no logging is planned and there is an abundance of a prolific understory species or one that should be thinned out, landowners can select and pot healthy plants to transplant and sell.

Survival rates of wild plants that are transplanted into pots will vary by age of the plant, degree of root damage, temperature/moisture conditions at the time of transplant, season and species, and the skill of the harvester. The sidebar lists a sample of native species with commercial value. Not listed are evergreen/conifer tree species, though there is a high demand for these as well. It is best to harvest only plants that are in abundance on your property and that reproduce quickly. Consulting your local area nursery about the native plants that they carry will also give you a good sense of what has commercial value and what species are in high demand. Also, most nurseries have experts that

can help you with the scientific names of the species, which will be useful as you research additional information to help with management and harvest.

Harvesting and Processing

Prior to removing any plant from your forest, consider the site from where the plant(s) will be removed. If this site is not already planned for clearing (e.g., timber harvesting or site development), select an area where soil erosion, sedimentation into waterways, disturbance to other plants/animals (particularly sensitive or endangered species), and threats to the population of the harvested species are minimized. Depending on the size of the transplant, choosing a site close to a road or trail will help with transporting it from the site.

The following are some general principles for harvesting wildlings. Keep in mind that species will vary in the timing and conditions that are best for transplanting. The best time of year to harvest many plants for transplanting is early spring, immediately after the ground has thawed and prior to buds opening. Plants can also be dug up in the fall, after the plant has become dormant. Ferns can be transplanted any time, except when fiddleheads (new leaves) are present, which is generally in mid-spring. Fall trimming of the roots of trees and shrubs that are planned for spring harvest is one strategy to help improve survival rates. Try to ensure that a sufficient amount of the plant roots are harvested. Keep in mind that for some plants, such as sword fern, the roots can be quite extensive and heavy, so be prepared with the proper equipment (e.g., wheelbarrow, ATV, pickup truck, tractor) to transport them. Once uprooted, cover the root ball with burlap to ensure that the soil remains around the roots. Treating the burlap with a vitamin B-1 solution will help reduce stress to uprooted plants. To prevent freezing or scorching of the plant, line the metal bed of your pickup with cardboard or plywood. During transport, if plants are in an open bed truck, cover them with a light colored tarp to prevent drying from the sun. Plants should be kept out of direct sunlight until transplanted into pots and watered.



Digging up tall Oregon grape.

If you plan to place plant into pots, this can be done on-site immediately after digging up or after transporting from the forest to a central processing point (e.g., your barn, garage, or shed). Make sure you have the correct size pot for your plant. Smaller plants that grow in a mat formation may be placed on plant trays or flats. Some larger ferns and trees may be kept wrapped in burlap around the root ball rather than placed in a pot, as long as the root ball remains sufficiently watered. You may need to add some additional potting soil and/or root stimulant to a potted plant. Taller plants may also need staking. The plant will be most susceptible to heat shock during the first few days after transplanting, so be sure to keep it out of direct sun and well-watered.

Marketing

As with any business, developing a good relationship with your buyer is the key to successful marketing. Most large nurseries will likely to be only interested in producers who can provide a large, steady and reliable volume of plants. They will also want some guarantee as to the viability of the plants they buy (e.g., replacing free any plants that die). Joining or forming a co-operative with other landowners is one way to achieve a large and steady supply of transplants if you don't have enough from your own land. Some smaller, local nurseries may be satisfied with a smaller volume or one-time sales, provided that there is some guarantee of quality/viability. Another approach is to sell directly to consumers via farmers markets and/or farm stands. You might be able to participate in or supply companies and agencies doing landscaping, restoration and mitigation projects that need locally derived native plants. Prices for transplants will vary by species and plant size, quality, volume, and other factors. Check local nurseries or on-line retailers and wholesalers to get a sense of prevailing wholesale and retail prices.

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