

Native Plants: GROUND COVER



Protecting the places you cherish

WHAT IS A GROUND COVER?

A ground cover is a plant that grows densely and low to the ground. Ground covers usually have a spreading or sprawling habit. This excludes turf grass which is what most people plant on their lawn. Turf can take a lot of traffic but it also needs a lot of upkeep as far as mowing, fertilizing, watering, and spraying with chemicals. Ground covers can be left to grow and need little upkeep in the beginning stages. After they have been established they can usually fend for themselves and grow fairly rapidly. They are also ideal for controlling erosion and weeds, filling crevices between paving stones, and for places where it is hard

to cut, like around trees, uneven ground, steep embankments, and spots where grass will not grow.

PLANTING NATIVE GROUND COVER

When planting a ground cover there are a couple of things that should be done. First, the ground should be free of all debris that could hinder the progress of the plant. Second, even though they have no problem competing with weeds once they have started they do need to be protected in the beginning stages. Mulching is an inexpensive way to easily control weeds. Compost has proved to be an ideal mulch and will also inexpensively fertilize the soil.

Steep Embankments and Shorelines

MULTICOLOURED BLUE FLAG

iris versicolor

This perennial herb grows 60 to 90 cm tall. The flower stems are erect and the flowers are a blue-violet with darker veins and yellow, green and white colouring towards the base.

FRAGRANT SUMACH

rhus aromatica

This low shrub has spreading branches and usually is less than 1.5 metres high. The flowers are small and yellowish with dense clustered spikes. The fruit is reddish and hairy with a berry like drupe.

Sun Loving Ground Cover

BEARBERRY

arctostaphylos uva-ursi

This evergreen shrub grows 5 to 15 cm high. It has stems trailing with ascending branches, the flowers are white to pinkish and urn shaped. The fruits are round, red and berry-like.

VIRGINIA CREEPER

parthenocissus vitacea

This woody vine climbs on exposed rocks and trees



and grows to about 10 metres in length. The flowers are small and greenish. The fruit are bright blue berries. It is an excellent ground cover along erodible shorelines and steep embankments.

BITTERSWEET

celastrus uva-ursi

This woody vine grows to about 7 metres long. The flowers are greenish yellow. The fruit are round, orange-yellow and slit open when ripe. This ground cover is best against fences or trellises.

Shade Loving Ground Cover

WINTERGREEN

gaultheria procumbens

This evergreen shrub grows 5 to 15 cm tall. The flowers are white and urn shaped. The fruits are round, red and berry-like. The foliage is aromatic and edible.

OSTRICH FERN

matteucia struthiopteris

This coarse erect to arching perennial fern grows up to 1.5 metres tall in clusters from stout underground rhizomes. It prefers a moist environment.

MAIDENHAIR FERN

adiantum pedatum

This nearly erect, circular shaped fern grows up to 60 cm tall. The leaves are a bluish colour and up to about 50 cm wide. It should be planted in a moist environment.

