



## Native Gardening in the Rainshadow: Why the Next Step Matters

*What comes after the welcome mat*

If you live between Sequim and Port Townsend, you already know your garden doesn't play by the same rules as the rest of western Washington. While rain falls in sheets on the Hoh Rainforest just fifty miles to the south, some north Peninsula towns see less annual precipitation than Los Angeles. This is the Olympic rainshadow, created when the Olympic Mountains wring the moisture out of Pacific storms before they ever reach the peninsula's northeastern shoulder. It makes this corner of Washington one of the strangest and most botanically distinct places in the Pacific Northwest — a landscape of Douglas fir and Garry oak woodlands, dry glacial outwash prairies, and plant communities that would look more at home in California's coastal hills than in a typical Puget Sound backyard.

A lot of people who care about birds, pollinators, and healthy yards start their journey with a checklist. Put out a feeder. Leave a brush pile. Skip the pesticides. These are valuable habits, and more than one excellent local program will walk a new gardener through them step by step, then hand over a certificate for the sign in the yard. That first step matters, and it deserves credit. But a checklist can only take a garden so far. It can confirm that a yard offers food, water, and shelter without ever asking whether the plants providing them are the ones that actually belong here — the plants that evolved alongside this region's rain-starved soils, its native pollinators, and the specific insects that specific birds need to raise their young.

That's the gap Wild Ones – Olympic Peninsula was built to close. Where introductory programs teach people to welcome wildlife in general terms, Wild Ones teaches people to rebuild the ecosystem those animals actually depend on — starting with the question almost no checklist asks: which native plants, at which...

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