Native Plant of the Month

Devil’s Club
*Oplopanax horridum*

- The common name on this plant focuses on the fact that the thorny stems can cause grief to unwary hikers, especially in winter when the stalks (clubs) are bare and buds look a bit like devils’ horns.
- In every other way, this plant is a superior native plant with its exotic form, reminiscent of ancient forests, and berries that are prized by bears and other wildlife.
- This plant is held in high regard by native people who use it for healing medicine, and ceremonially for its protective powers.

Landscape Value

Though the thorns are intimidating in a landscape setting, devil’s club can be successfully used as a dramatic landscape feature if placed properly. It favors wet seeps and springs: therefore, place it near water features or wet areas, out of reach of unwary garden visitors.

Devil’s club will give a striking show through the seasons. Bare winter stalks give way to early sprouts, which quickly transform to large prehistoric-appearing leaves. Inconspicuous flowers are followed by beautiful clusters of berries. Finally, in fall, the huge leaves turn a brilliant yellow and fall to earth. It will colonize by underground rhizomes so give it room to grow.

Text by Heidi Bohan
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