Native Plant of the Month

Mock Orange
Philadelphus lewisii

- The large, four-petaled, sweet scented flowers are similar to orange blossoms and so provides its common name.
- Meriwether Lewis collected this plant during the Voyage of Discovery. The Voyage’s herbarium collection was brought to Philadelphia where it was studied and named in honor of Lewis.
- Bees, butterflies, and other nectar-loving creatures flock to this plant during its bloom in early summer.
- The hard dense wood was used by native people for arrows and other tools. The leaves and flowers were used as a soap.

Landscape Value

Mock orange, a member of the Hydrangea family, is now a well-known ornamental worldwide. Its attractive form and leaves provide a strong foundation for its profuse display of scented flowers in summer. The flowers are followed by unusual seed capsules.

This deciduous shrub loves a full sun position though it will tolerate partial shade. Its range includes eastern Washington, Idaho, and Montana where it grows along rivers and creeks.

Plant in the company of serviceberry, oceanspray, Ceanothus, wild rose, red flowering currant, and wax myrtle for a beautiful shrub hedgerow. Underplant with perennials such as farewell-to-spring, yarrow, lupine, and goldenrod.

Unique leaf veining helps to identify this plant (above). The flowers turn into dry seed capsules (below).

Text by Heidi Bohan
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