Common Camas  (*Camassia quamash*)  
Lily Family

A Blue Beauty

When Lewis and Clark first saw meadows of Common Camas, Lewis wrote, “the colour of its bloom… resembles lakes of clear water.” Even just a few bulbs of this member of the Lily family will bring a patch of sky to your yard.

In the Garden

The clusters of star-shaped blue flowers will come back spring after spring, offering nectar to butterflies and hummingbirds. Combine it in a border with other bulbs, like delicate yellow jonquils or brazenly pink tulips, for a cheerful spring show.

The Facts

Enjoy the flowers in the spring, but plant the small egg-shaped bulbs in the fall, about four inches deep. Drought-tolerant Common Camas grows best in full sun, where it has plenty of water in the winter and spring but can dry out in the summer.

Where to See It

Common Camas can be found at low to middle elevations on both sides of the Cascades. It thrives in the rare, at-risk prairie habitats found in Western Washington. In the spring, look for Common Camas in moist meadows or seepy habitats, especially those that dry up by late spring or early summer.
And hey, can’t you eat the bulbs?

Well, you can, but watch out. While camas bulbs were an important staple food for native Northwest peoples east and west of the Cascades, preparation took some doing and some caution. The bulbs and grass-like leaves of Common Camas are easy to confuse with those of the aptly named Death Camas (*Zigadenus venenosus*), so even though the flowers are different colors, mix-ups and fatalities can occur. Not only that, but if Common Camas bulbs aren’t cooked properly, they can cause gale-force flatulence!

You can find out more information about native plants, including where to buy them, from the Washington Native Plant Society.

www.wnps.org
206-527-3210 or 1-888-288-8022

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Native Plant Spotlights
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