False Solomon’s Seal (*Maianthemum racemosum*)
Lily Family

**Why Choose It?**

Springing out of the ground in a graceful arch, there’s nothing false about the pleasure False Solomon’s Seal brings. It lights up the forest with its creamy springtime plume, and the fragrant flowers turn to red berries in the summer. As days shorten, the glossy green plant fades to a delicate autumnal yellow.

**In the Garden**

False Solomon’s Seal makes a striking accent plant in moist woods. A robust and hardy perennial, it’s vigorous but not pushy. Nice with ferns, it will grow in deep shade to full sun and can handle wet soil. Birds such as thrushes and grouse feed on its berries, even though humans find them pretty blah.

**The Facts**

False Solomon’s Seal is a perennial that comes up in March, and it develops stalks one to three feet tall with elongate leaves alternating along the stem. Sometime from April to June, the sweet-smelling flowers top the stalk in a conic cluster. It'll grow best in a site that’s moist in the spring. If you water it well during its first two summers in your garden, it should be established enough for our dry summers after that.

**Where to See It**

Look for False Solomon’s Seal from sea level to mid-elevations along streams and in damp forests where English ivy hasn’t invaded.

Photo by Ben Legler
And, hey, what’s false about it?

When the flowering stalks of False Solomon’s Seal break from the underground stem, the scar that’s left is a circular depression. In the “true” Solomon’s Seals, members of the botanical genus *Polygonatum*, the scar resembles two interlocking triangles within a circle—the seal of Solomon.

Photo: Tim Hagan

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

Native Plant Spotlights
Adapted from writing by Sarah Gage
© WNPS