Hooker’s Fairy Bells (Prosartes hookeri var. oregana)
Lily Family

**Why Choose It?**

This delicate and charming member of the Lily family will happily spread in shaded garden areas, under trees and large shrubs. It is a wonderful substitute for many of the non-native ground covers that are typically found in shade.

**In the Garden**

Fairy Bells make a wonderful and attractive ground cover. Once it spreads, which it does moderately (no need to worry about it taking over), it provides a carpet of attractive foliage and its dense, rhizomatous, root system discourages other plants from coming up between. It can be combined with other shade lovers such as wood sorrel (Oxalis oregana), false Solomon’s seal (Maianthemum racemosa), or sword fern (Polystichum munitum).

**The Facts**

Like most members of the Lily family, Fairy Bells begin the season by producing a single sprout, which eventually unfurls to form a 1’ to 3’ tall branching plant. Their pointed leaf tips are twisted to form little “spouts” which allow the abundant rainfall that occurs where these plants grow to run off. In spring, pendent, bell-shaped, white flowers appear in two’s and three’s at the tips of each stem, and are followed by yellow-orange berries which finally turn bright red. Besides being shade loving, Fairy Bells also want a moist, forest-like soil, so that means lots of organic matter. They can get through the summer with some supplemental watering during dry spells.

**Where to See It**

Hooker’s Fairy Bells grow at low to mid elevations in shaded woodlands both east and west of the Cascades.
And where else do they grow?

*Prosartes hookeri* is mostly a plant of the Northwest and Northern California. However, it can also be found in the Porcupine Mountains on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, where it is considered rare. There, it grows in mixed forests of sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) and eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*). The interesting thing is that so far, it has not been found anywhere between the northwest and its outpost in northern Michigan.

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

Photo: Ben Legler

**Native Plant Spotlights**

Adapted from writing by Cynthia Spurgeon

© WNPS