Mock Orange (*Philadelphus lewisii*)
Hydrangea Family

**Sweet-Scented Shrub**

The fragrance is nothing to mock—and it’s much less cloying than true orange trees. The sweetly scented flowers of Mock Orange are a highlight of early summer. They bloom radiantly white against the gentle green of this graceful and hardy shrub, and the show can last for two months or more.

**In the Garden**

This deciduous shrub will thrive in full sun or part shade and forms the kinds of thickets that birds love. Watch for bluebirds, juncoes, and finches in its branches, and quail or grouse scratching the ground underneath. The gleam of the white flowers attracts night-flying moths, and swallowtail butterflies and hummingbirds enjoy its nectar. Plant it in a border, as a focal point, or as a screening hedge.

**The Facts**

Mock Orange isn’t picky, but it deserves a good start in life. Water it deeply during its first two years in the garden, and it will reward this care with years of bloom. Height and spread vary, depending on growing conditions. If babied, it may grow to 15 feet tall; in a dry, hot garden it will probably max out at less than 6 feet. Prune out older wood after flowering every year; this year’s branches will bear flowers next year.

**Where to See It**

Look for Mock Orange flowering among other creek-side shrubs from May to July. Or see it on dry rocky slopes of basalt or talus or under open stands of Ponderosa pine.
And, hey, what about the wood?

Strong and straight, Mock Orange wood has been used for arrow shafts, digging sticks, and curved into snowshoe frames. The twigs’ interior pith is spongy and can be hollowed out to make pipes and peashooters.

Unlike the fleshy fruit of “true” oranges, the Mock Orange fruit is a dry capsule. (Photo: Ben Legler)

The four-parted flower and brush of stamens give the mock orange blossom a striking appearance. (Photo: Ben Legler)

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
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