Serviceberry (Amelanchier alnifolia)
Rose Family

Why Choose It?

A show of white flowers in spring, tasty dark blue berries in late summer, yellow leaves in fall, Serviceberry is more than just serviceable. But this deciduous shrub does serve, and admirably—adaptable to hillsides, roadsides, stream sides, and rock slides, not to mention open forests and against the garden fence.

In the Garden

Serviceberry berries (actually “pomes” in botany-speak, like miniature apples) ripen in purplish-black clusters, to feed happy and showy birds such as orioles, goldfinches, and chickadees. Serviceberry’s rhizomes will knit together underground, making a nice stand and helping control erosion, but it’s not aggressive about it.

The Facts

Serviceberry grows as an open, erect shrub, usually 6 to 12 feet tall unless browsed heavily by deer or elk or cattle. Once the shrub is well established, it can tolerate some munching. Happiest in sun, it can handle some shade. Be sure to give it a couple of summers of water when it’s first in the garden, but then Serviceberry can make it through drier times.

Where to See It

Watch for the flash of its white flowers as you drive through hillsides and forests in spring. See dwarfed shrubs on talus slopes throughout the sagebrush-steppe.
And, how about those berries?

Throw a mesh net over Serviceberry in late summer to save some berries from the birds. Then decide whether to eat them fresh, dry ’em like raisins, bake them into a pie, boil up some jelly, or pound them with meat into pemmican.

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
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