Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus* var. *laevigatus*)  
Honeysuckle Family

**Why Choose It?**

Clusters of pure white berries that appear in late summer and fall and last through much of the winter make Snowberry one of the most appropriately named native shrubs. The berries show up particularly well on the wiry, leafless stems. In late spring or early summer, its pretty blue-green leaves provide a nice contrast to the tiny pink flowers, which by the way, the hummingbirds love.

**In the Garden**

These plants thrive in a variety of locations, including in the dry shade under large trees, one of the commonest problem areas in local gardens. They can be pruned to be nice hedges, providing twiggy, dense shelter for wildlife and they are useful to stabilize banks and slopes because of their vigorous root systems. Because of their winter interest, they make attractive container subjects when combined with evergreens such as low Oregon grape or evergreen huckleberry.

**The Facts**

Snowberry is tolerant of a wide range of conditions, but part shade - part sun is ideal. It will grow well in full shade, but will produce better bloom and berries if it gets some sun. Maintenance is easy, simply prune away some of the suckers every few years to keep it in check. If it gets too tall, it can be sheared back in late winter to keep it compact. The berries are not considered edible, being very bitter tasting. They are not the first choice for most birds, but Thrushes in particular with eat them if there isn’t anything else available.

**Where to See It**

Snowberry is a wide-ranging plant, growing in one form or another across North America. Our variety is found in many different habitats, open to shaded, moist to dry, from low to mid elevations both east and west of the Cascades.
And some interesting history:

Lewis and Clark collected this plant and brought it back to Thomas Jefferson. It was sent to England in 1817, and became a popular garden novelty among plant collectors there.

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

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