Tall Oregon Grape (Berberis aquifolium)
Barberry Family

Why Choose It?
Tall Oregon Grape, the state flower of Oregon, has just about everything going for it as a garden plant. It starts out in spring with copper colored new growth, turns shiny green in summer and then the whole plant turns an attractive bronze-purple color for fall and winter. And did I mention the golden yellow flowers and the dusty blue berries?

In the Garden
Its upright habit makes Tall Oregon Grape perfect for formal hedges, and the fact that it is evergreen makes it a natural for barriers and screens. It also has a place in informal plantings where it shines on its own, or in woodland plantings with other Northwest natives.

The Facts
Tall Oregon Grape grows to about 6 feet tall, and about 3 feet wide. Its glossy, green, holly-like leaves emerge coppery in the spring, contrasting nicely with the golden yellow, scented flowers which are clustered at the top of the stems. The frosted blue “grapes” (actually a berry), follow in summer. Tall Oregon Grape is not fussy, and will grow in sun or shade. Pruning is easy, simply cut back old or damaged stems all the way to the ground.

Where to See It
Look for it in open woods, mostly west of the Cascades, from British Columbia through Washington and Oregon to Northern California.
And in addition:

If you want to attract birds to your garden, this is the plant that will do it. Robins, waxwings, juncos and towhees among others, find the berries irresistible. You can eat them too, they make a nice jelly. Or, you can make a nice, bright yellow dye from the shredded bark. Truly an all purpose plant.

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

www.wnps.org

Photo: Ben Legler

Native Plant Spotlights

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