

Prairie Urban Garden - Oldman Watershed Council

Xeriscape Priority Plant List

SHRUBS

Attribute	Response
Common Name	Ninebark
Scientific Name	<i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i>
Origin	Native cultivars. The native plant that is responsible for the commercially available cultivars originates from eastern Canada and United States. The species extend from Manitoba eastward. The species of Ninebark native to Alberta can also be found in British Columbia. It is also found in the northwestern U.S.
Height	1.8 - 2.4 m (6-8')
Spread	1.8 – 2.4 m (6-8')
Life Form	Multi- stemmed, deciduous upright, clumping shrub.
Flower Color	Tight clusters white flowers.
Foliage Color	Burgundy, Coppery-orange, Purplish-red, Golden-green; the leaves are simple with 3-5 lobes and serrated margins.
Flowering Period	Late spring to early summer
Habitat	Full sun to partial shade. Dry to moist soils of loamy, sandy soil texture. The Ninebark cultivars are hardy to Zone 3 & Zone 4.
Maintenance	Ninebark is a very low maintenance species; only minor pruning will be required to keep these cultivars looking tidy. Pruning can occur after flowering to remove any stray branches. The cultivars of Ninebark are hardy to Zone 3.
Availability	Many of the cultivars are widely available from general plant nurseries and seasonal garden centers. They are sold in a number of different sized containers.
Special Notes	<p>Alberta is home to the native Mallow-leaved Ninebark (<i>Physocarpus malvaceus</i>). In its native habitat it is found on dry, open slopes within forested, Montane habitats. Unfortunately, this species is not commercially available.</p> <p>There are a number of Ninebark cultivars that offer a nice selection in terms of size and foliage color. Once established they are quite drought tolerant. They are all well behaved specimens that offer season long interest by their fantastic foliage shape and color. During the winter the shrub provides winterscape value from its shredding and peeling bark.</p> <p>The 'Summer Wine' and 'Diablo' cultivars possess burgundy to purplish red leaves. The 'Center Glow' and 'Darts Gold' have yellow to golden leaf colors.</p> <p>The 'Diablo' and 'Center Glow' are some of the largest Ninebarks at about 2.4 m (8') height and spread.</p> <p>The "Summer Wine" and "Dart's Gold" are better suited for smaller</p>

	spaces providing an equal height and spread of 1.5 m (5'). If you want to create a big impact in your garden pair a 'Summer Wine' and 'Dart's Gold' side by side; you will enjoy the contrasting golden and burgundy leaf colors all season long.
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Attribute	Response
Common Name	Shrubby Cinquefoil
Scientific Name	<i>Dasiphora floribunda</i> or <i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>
Origin	Native and Native Cultivars. The native species is widely distributed throughout all of Canada and the northern and western U.S.
Height	60 cm - 1.2 m (24"– 4')
Spread	90 cm - 1.2 m (36"– 4')
Life Form	Multi-stemmed, deciduous low, irregular mounded shrub.
Flower Color	A member of the Rose family, the native species possesses yellow colored flowers, while the cultivars have white, orange, pink and yellow flowers.
Foliage Color	Green pinnately compound leaves with 5-7 leaflets.
Flowering Period	Flowers throughout summer months, June - September
Habitat	Full sun to partial shade; well drained soils. They prefer loam to sandy soil texture. The native species is often found on grassland slopes and open sites within the Foothills and Plains Fescue Grassland. The native species is hardy to Zone 2, while the cultivars are hardy to Zone 2-3.
Maintenance	Shrubby Cinquefoil is a very low maintenance shrub species. It naturally presents with many irregular branches forming a low mounded "scruffy" appearance. Therefore, it is well suited to a natural garden style. It can be used in a more formal planting as a contrasting texture within the garden design. If pruning is needed it can occur during the summer months after flowering.
Availability	The native species is commonly found at native plant suppliers and nurseries, while the cultivars are even more abundant and can be found at most, if not all general plant nurseries and seasonal garden centers. They are available in various sized containers.
Special Notes	This shrub is very hardy to Southern Alberta and makes a welcome addition to a low maintenance xeriscape yard. It has a lengthy flowering period and can be used as a single specimen, small grouping or in mass plantings to provide a ground cover. The Cinquefoils as a whole have similar growth potentials (with a few smaller varieties offered), so for the most part your selection will be based on your flower color preference. Many of the Cinquefoil cultivars reflect their flower color in their name; for example, Orange Whisper, Gold Star, Pink Beauty, Goldfinger, Gold Drop and Yellow Gem.

Attribute	Response
Common Name	Mugo Pine
Scientific Name	<i>Pinus mugo</i>
Origin	Non-native cultivars; Mugo Pine is native to Europe - high elevation, alpine habitats.
Height	60 cm - 3.7 m (24" – 12')
Spread	90 cm - 2.0 m (36" - 6'6")
Life Form	Highly variable coniferous species; depending on the cultivar is found as a dwarf sized shrub, large shrub and small tree.
Flower Color	Brown - cone
Foliage Color	Green evergreen needles; in fascicles (bundles or clusters) of 2 needles.
Flowering Period	Not applicable
Habitat	Full sun to light shade, well drained soils. Mugo Pine does not like water saturated soils, prefers loam to sandy soil textures. It is hardy to Zone 2-3.
Maintenance	Low maintenance, so long as the correct cultivar has been selected to match the site. The new year's terminal leaders or candles for each branch should be cut back to 1/3 of its growth; this should occur before the needles open, so target late May-early June. It is probably best to cut them in two stages, the first cutting will get the most active candles followed a week later pruning the weaker candles. This pruning will promote lateral growth to create a fuller, more robust plant and avoid the leggy appearance that often occurs with specimens left to their own.
Availability	The height range of Mugo pine cultivars vary widely. Often the seasonal garden centers only carry the larger sized selections and to obtain a dwarf variety ('Slowmound') or the larger tree form ('Tannenbaum') you should attend a general plant nursery that carries some of the more specialized specimens. Therefore, make sure you read the plant label carefully to ensure you have the correct sized specimen for your site. If you don't you will be doing a lot more pruning than for just aesthetic appeal as suggested in the maintenance section. Mugo Pine is sold in many different sized containers and the Genus as whole is widely distributed and easily accessible.
Special Notes	Mugo Pine and its many cultivars offer excellent choices for the xeriscape yard. The plant is an evergreen and will provide some needed greenery throughout the winter season. In the summer the harshness of the foliage provides a nice contrast when mixed with wildflower perennials and grasses. The "Slowmound" cultivar is a dwarf variety which grows to about 60 cm (24') in height and 90 cm (36") in spread; very suitable for an accent piece or small cluster in a rock garden. The "Mughus" cultivar is a large shrub variety growing to 2 m (6'6") in equal height and spread; more suitable as a solitary specimen or

	grouped to create a screen. The “Tannenbaum” cultivar is a small tree variety 3.7 m (12’) in height and 2.0 m (6’6”) in spread; very suitable as a prominent solitary accent specimen.
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Attribute	Response
Common Name	Thorny Buffaloberry or Silver Buffaloberry
Scientific Name	<i>Shepherdia argentea</i>
Origin	Native. This native species is original to the four western Canadian provinces and is primarily common to the northern and southwestern United States.
Height	2.6 m (8’6”)
Spread	2.6 m (8’6”)
Life Form	Upright multi-stemmed deciduous large shrub.
Flower Color	Yellow
Foliage Color	Grey-green to silver colored leaves. The leaves possess a scurfy (overlapping scale like hairs) pubescence that creates this silver color on the leaves, branches, and fruit. The leaves are simple, opposite, and oblong to lanceolate in shape.
Flowering Period	Early Spring
Habitat	Full sun, very well drained soils – does not tolerate standing water. Prefers loam, sandy soil texture.
Maintenance	Minimal pruning required; however tends to sucker. This shrub produces a number of red attractive berries in late summer.
Availability	This is one of those good news stories in terms of native plant propagation. It is one the few native shrubs that is available as a native species in many commercial markets. Thorny Buffaloberry can be found as expected at native plant suppliers and nurseries, as well as many of the general plant nurseries. Unfortunately, it is not present in the seasonal garden centers to date. It can be purchased in both plug form or various sized containers.
Special Notes	Thorny Buffaloberry gets its name from the sharp pointed appendage that forms along the terminal and lateral branch ends called an armed branchlet. An armed branchlet possesses lateral buds along its length, which differs from a true thorn that does not have any buds. If you are looking for a large shrub with silver foliage this is an excellent selection; one that easily replaces the

	<p>non-native shrub form of Russian Olive (<i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i>). The silver foliage provides a nice color contrast to complement most yards. Thorny Buffaloberry can be used as a screen by itself or in multiples provides a great natural alternative to a wood fence; the armament on the branches will serve as a significant impenetrable obstacle and thus serves as a great security fence. The red fruit is palatable for human consumption and is a sought after by many bird species.</p>
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Attribute	Response
Common Name	Blue Juniper
Scientific Name	<i>Juniperus scopulorum</i>
Origin	Native and native cultivars. The Rocky Mountain Juniper (<i>Juniperus scopulorum</i>) is a native upright form of Juniper and is typically found in western Canada (Alberta & British Columbia). It is also native to many of the northern and southwestern United States.
Height	3 – 6 m (10-20')
Spread	90 cm - 1.8 m (36" – 6')
Life Form	Upright coniferous, evergreen shrub.
Flower Color	Bluish-white berry-like structure; no landscape significance
Foliage Color	Blue to bluish-green scale-like needles.
Flowering Period	Not applicable
Habitat	Full sun and well drained soils; does not tolerate standing water. They are quite drought tolerant once established. Juniper is hardy to Zone 3.
Maintenance	The upright Junipers are considered a low maintenance species; they benefit from some pruning but it is not mandatory. The 'Wichita Blue' and 'Moonglow' cultivars will become fuller, more robust, and hold its shape better when it receives some pruning. The terminal leaders from the lateral and terminal branches should be pinched off by 2/3 of its current season growth. Pruning should be targeted for late May, to early June. The pruning will promote further lateral growth and thereby allow for a denser canopy. The 'Medora' cultivar holds its shape better and does not require pruning.
Availability	The native Rocky Mountain Juniper is unfortunately not commonly found; I have only found one location in Vernon, BC that carried this native species. Equally disappointing is they did not offer mail order. The cultivars of this selection are very common to most general plant nurseries and seasonal garden centers. The 'Moonglow' and 'Wichita Blue' are probably the most common on offer. The general plant nurseries typically offer a wider selection and some of them will be discussed in the special notes section. The upright Juniper

	cultivars can be purchased in many different sized containers.
Special Notes	<p>There are a number of notable upright Juniper cultivars to mention. As a whole these species provides valuable vertical interest to the garden; they can be used to accentuate an existing vertical structure or architectural feature. They can be used as an accent specimen, small grouping, or they can be put together in mass to produce an attractive screen. The evergreen nature of Juniper also provides winterscape value.</p> <p>The 'Wichita Blue' as the name suggests has wonderful silver- blue foliage and with minor pruning provides a nice pyramidal shape. It can grow to 4 m (13') in height and 1.5 m (5') in spread.</p> <p>The 'Moonglow' cultivar is very similar to the above noted cultivar but grows to 5 m (17') in height and 2 m (7') in spread.</p> <p>A green needled variety is the 'Cologreen' Juniper. It has a similar growth potential as the 'Moonglow' cultivar.</p> <p>A final selection that is perfect for sites with a small footprint, but still requiring some substantial height is the 'Blue Arrow' cultivar. It grows to 4 m (13') but only has a very narrow spread of 1 m (3').</p>

Attribute	Response
Common Name	Golden Currant
Scientific Name	<i>Ribes aureum</i>
Origin	Native. This shrub is widely distributed throughout Canada and United States; with the exception of the eastern seaboard provinces and states.
Height	1.8 m (6')
Spread	1.8 m (6')
Life Form	Upright multi-stemmed medium sized deciduous shrub
Flower Color	Yellow
Foliage Color	Green turning to orange in the fall. Leaves are simple, trifoliate lobed with prominent mid-veins.
Flowering Period	Mid spring
Habitat	Full sun to partial shade. In Alberta it is common along riparian edges and coulee slopes. It prefers well drained soils, particularly to loam, sandy, gravelly soil texture.
Maintenance	Golden Currant is a low maintenance shrub that will only need minor pruning to maintain its form. Pruning can occur during the summer, as soon as it has completed flowering.
Availability	The native species of Golden Currant can be found at native plant suppliers & nurseries, and is common in most general plant nurseries. However, it is not as abundant in the seasonal garden centers. This selection is available in a number of different sized containers.
Special Notes	Golden Currant has a very attractive three lobed leaf that provides character throughout the summer. The shrub produces a berry that

	<p>is palatable for human consumption and is sought after by many bird species. The fruit is commonly used in jams and jellies.</p> <p>The size of Golden Currant is appropriate for many yard applications and is a relatively long lived species that will provide many years of problem free growth.</p> <p>An alternative to Golden Currant for those shadier sites is Alpine Currant (<i>Ribes alpinum</i>); it is a non-native selection from central and northern Europe that is drought tolerant and suitable to a wide array of habitats, including shade. Also, this cultivar does not produce fruit which is very advantageous to a xeriscape application. Alpine Currant grows to 1.5 m (5') in height and 1.8 m (6') in spread. It possesses the typical currant/gooseberry "maple leaf" shape and is well suited for use as a hedge or accent specimen.</p> <p>You will notice when you attend your local plant nursery that two common names appear associated with the same genera called <i>Ribes</i>. The common name "Currant" is given to those shrubs that belong to the <i>Ribes</i> genus that do not possess prickles or spines; whereas those referred to as Gooseberries do possess prickles and spines but also belong to the genus <i>Ribes</i>.</p>
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Attribute	Response
Common Name	Skunkbrush, Lemonade Sumac or Three-lobed Sumac
Scientific Name	<i>Rhus trilobata</i>
Origin	Native. This species is native to Canada and is found in southern Alberta and Saskatchewan. In the United States it is common to the Great Plains and western states from the north to south.
Height	90 cm - 1.5 m (36" - 5')
Spread	90 cm - 1.5 m (36" - 5')
Life Form	Upright multi-stemmed deciduous shrub.
Flower Color	Pale yellow
Foliage Color	Dark green; Trifoliolate compound leaves.
Flowering Period	Late spring to early summer
Habitat	Full sun; tolerant to a variety of soil types, so long as they are well drained; it is intolerant to water laden soils. Skunkbrush is hardy to Zone 3
Maintenance	Skunkbrush is a very low maintenance plant; this is a medium sized shrub that should not require pruning. It is extremely drought tolerant and self-sustaining species.
Availability	This selection is offered more frequently at native plant suppliers & nurseries under the common name Skunkbrush. It is not always found in the general plant nurseries but when it is located typically goes by the name Lemonade or Three-lobed Sumac. They are usually found in small sized containers.

Special Notes	<p>This native shrub is certainly underutilized as a xeriscape or even general landscape plant; maybe because of its unfortunate Skunkbrush name. However, this plant has a very deep and well developed root system and is very drought tolerant. It is an attractive looking shrub with good proportions and an interesting compound leaf. The shrub is documented as emitting a foul smell; but nothing I have been able to detect.</p> <p>The fruit can be used to produce a cool late summer drink. The fruit should be allowed to soak in hot water, and then cooled for a lemonade flavored drink. This is a native species that at present is commercially available, but needs an increase in demand in order to improve supply. Thus, ask for Lemonade Sumac or Three-lobed Sumac at your local plant nursery and seasonal garden centers and allow this plant greater prominence.</p>
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Attribute	Response
Common Name	Soapweed or Yucca
Scientific Name	<i>Yucca glauca</i>
Origin	Native. In Canada, this selection is only native to Southern Alberta. In the U.S. it is found in the Great Plains from Montana to Texas.
Height	60 cm – 90 cm (24-36")
Spread	60 cm – 90 cm (24-36")
Life Form	Upright, multi-leaved evergreen shrub or sub-shrub.
Flower Color	A large raceme inflorescence of bell shaped creamy-white flowers.
Foliage Color	Bluish-green with a narrow white edge. The species name 'glauca' is in reference to the whitish hue to the leaves. The leaves are rigid, linear to lanceolate shaped, with coarse fibers along the margins and a sharp apex.
Flowering Period	June-July
Habitat	Yucca prefers full sun with well drained soils; sandy, rocky coarse textured soils are best. Yucca is hardy to Zone 3.
Maintenance	This is one of those plants that you essentially leave it alone once it has established. It does not need any pruning so long as you have left enough space for it to grow to maturity. This is very important especially if it is near a path or sidewalk. The leaves of Yucca are very sharp and you certainly do not want this shrub encroaching anywhere near where you have to pass by with any regularity.
Availability	Potted plants; although usually not found in large quantities it can be found frequently in many nurseries and garden centers. Thus, search early season for this one and hopefully supply will increase with the greater demand.
Special Notes	This native plant epitomizes the xeriscape garden. It can be found infrequently along coulee slopes of southern Alberta. It conjures up notions of the Arizona desert and everything dry. It is a favorite of mine for its harsh, prominent appearance, and ease of care. Its

	<p>evergreen leaves provides for wonderful winterscape value as the rigid leaves peak through the snow. Adam's Needle (<i>Yucca filamentosa</i>) can also be found in local plant nurseries but it is more aggressive and thus prone to more maintenance than Soapweed. Also, it is not a local native species, but is native to the mid to eastern U.S. Therefore, the best choice is still the <i>Yucca glauca</i>.</p>
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Attribute	Response
Common Name	Red Osier Dogwood
Scientific Name	<i>Cornus sericea</i> or <i>Cornus stolonifera</i>
Origin	Native and native cultivars. Red Osier Dogwood is widely distributed and can be found coast to coast in Canada. In the United States it is native to the mid to northern states.
Height	3.0 m (10')
Spread	3.0 m (10')
Life Form	Large multi-stemmed deciduous shrub with a more or less rounded form.
Flower Color	A flat topped cluster (cyme) inflorescence with white flowers. In the fall they produce a white or bluish-white berry-like fruit called a drupe.
Foliage Color	Opposite branching, the native species presents with elliptical green leaves while some cultivars and non-native selections have variegated leaves. The new growth of Red Osier Dogwood is very attractive red twigs and stems.
Flowering Period	Late spring
Habitat	Full sun to partial shade; it is a highly adaptable species. In nature Red Osier Dogwood is commonly found as a preferred riparian species (along water bodies – streams, creeks, wetlands etc.). However, it is also tolerant of dry conditions and therefore very suitable to some landscape applications within Southern Alberta. Dogwood is considered moderately drought tolerant once established. I prefer to use this selection in those areas of the yard that receive more moisture because of slope or grade issues and to those locations adjacent to or in front of the eaves down spouts. The additional, naturally occurring soil moisture associated with these locations works well with the adaptability of this shrub. As well, our soils naturally in Southern Alberta during the months of July and August characteristically experience a moisture deficit; but Red Osier Dogwood is adaptable to meet these challenges. Red Osier Dogwood is a very hardy species, to Zone 2.
Maintenance	This shrub requires only minimal care and when light pruning is required it is not specific to any one time during the year. There are smaller cultivars available that develop denser canopies and these will require even less maintenance to no pruning at all.
Availability	The native species of Red Osier Dogwood can be found at most

	native plant suppliers and nurseries. It is also common to many of the general plant nurseries, along with a wide selection of cultivar varieties. The seasonal garden centers tend to provide only the cultivars. Both the native and the cultivars are available in a number of different sized containers.
Special Notes	<p>This shrub selection offers distinctive appeal for both summer and winter seasons. During the winter it provides some much needed color to the landscape with its colorful bark. The red or yellow bark is a great addition to any yard in the winter; but if you put both varieties together you can really achieve an eye catching winter display.</p> <p>The native species as mentioned has red bark, but some of the Dogwood cultivars have yellow bark. The 'Silver and Gold' cultivar is an example; it also has green and white variegated leaves. This selection grows to about 2.4 m (8') in both height and spread.</p> <p>If a smaller shrub is needed there is a wonderful selection called Arctic Fire Dogwood (<i>Cornus stolonifera</i> 'Farrow'). This cultivar has many more stems than the species but in a shorter form. This selection grows to only 1.2 m (4') in height and about 1 m (3') in spread (essentially half the size of the native species). Thus, it packs a lot more into a smaller package.</p> <p>A final note here is that you will likely find at your local plant supplier a number of different non-native selections of Dogwood; these are called Tatarian Dogwood (<i>Cornus alba</i>). These Dogwood cultivars originate from Northeastern Asia. They offer a number of different varieties; expressing a range of sizes, red & yellow bark, and green & variegated colored leaves. As a whole the Tatarian Dogwood cultivars are slightly smaller than the native <i>C. sericea</i>.</p>

Attribute	Response
Common Name	Silver Sagebrush
Scientific Name	<i>Artemisia cana</i>
Origin	Native. This shrub is native to the southern portion of our four western Canadian provinces. It is found in the United States to the Great Plains and western states.
Height	60 – 120 cm (2-4')
Spread	60 – 120 cm (2-4')
Life Form	A multi-stemmed, aromatic, evergreen shrub producing an irregular to elliptical canopy of equal height to spread. Silver Sagebrush is a warm season (C ₄) species.
Flower Color	A member of the Aster (Sunflower) family produces yellow disk florets. The flowers are borne on densely leaved branches.
Foliage Color	Simple, linear, silver in color resulting from a dense covering of silver-grey hairs on the surface.
Flowering Period	Late summer – August to September

Habitat	This is a very drought tolerant selection that prefers full sun and well drained soils. In nature, Silver Sagebrush is associated to loam and sandy soils within the Mixedgrass Prairie; it is common to coulee benches and valley bottoms. It is hardy to Zone 3.
Maintenance	The canopy of Silver Sagebrush is somewhat irregular and should be allowed to grow as such; thus requiring only a limited amount of pruning. As required the old wood and spent inflorescence stems can be trimmed. This will provide a cleaner look and improve the vigor of the shrub.
Availability	Unfortunately, this selection is only available at native plant suppliers and nurseries. It can be purchased in the form of seed, and both plug & small containers. The same is said of Pasture Sage (see next section). These two native <i>Artemisia</i> species are common to our prairie grasslands and more demand needs to be created in order to increase their supply. A perennial herbaceous <i>Artemisia</i> variety (see next section) is commercially available throughout most plant suppliers.
Special Notes	<p>Silver Sagebrush is somewhat of an iconic species for the xeriscape garden; providing the classic silver-green appearance that is well known for drought tolerant plants.</p> <p>A smaller native selection which is well suited to a rock garden application is Pasture Sage or Prairie Sagewort (<i>Artemisia frigida</i>). This species is classified as a shrub to half-shrub; it dies back each year to a woody, crown- base. This species is widely distributed across Canada and the U.S. In Alberta it is common to the Mixedgrass Prairie; dry, open sites on south to south-west aspects. This species, like Silver Sagebrush is aromatic and possesses silvery-grey, softly pubescent leaves. However, these leaves compound, highly dissected or fringed. It is a low growing, mounded to creeping form in which its vegetation grows to about 10cm (4") in height and its flowering inflorescence extends to 40-50 cm (16"-20").</p> <p>If you have a difficult time locating the two native <i>Artemisia</i> discussed above you may want to consider a non-native herbaceous perennial species originally from Japan called Silver Mound (<i>Artemisia schmidtiana</i>). This selection is extremely drought tolerant and does not maintain its strong mounding characteristic if it receives too much moisture. It grows to 30 cm (12") and 45 cm (18") in spread. A compact variety is available (<i>A. schmidtiana</i> 'Nana') which grows to 10 cm (4') in height and only 30 cm (12") in spread.</p>