

# Plant Guide to Robinswood

Please return to the park bench in the middle of the trails. (See map.)

## Dichotomous Key for Plants at Robinswood

1. a. Is it a tree? Go to 2.

1. b. Not a tree? Go to 4.

2. a. Is it deciduous? It's a big leaf maple. →

2. b. Is it evergreen? Go to 3.



3. a. Does it have rough bark? It's a Douglas Fir. →

3. b. Does it have softer bark you can peel? It's a red cedar. →



4. a. Is it a fern? It's a sword fern. →

4. b. Not a fern? Go to 5.

5. a. Is it a plant that trails along the ground? Go to 6.

5. b. Is it a bush / shrub? Go to 8.



6. a. Does it have prickly stems? It's trailing blackberry. →

6. b. No thorns or prickles? Go to 7.



7. a. Does it have glossy green 5-lobed leaves? It's ivy. →

7. b. Does it have glossy leaves with one point and blue or white blossoms? It's vinca. ↓

8. a. Is it deciduous? It's an Indian plum. →

8. b. Is it evergreen? Go to 9



9. a. Are there thorns on the stems and branches? Go to 10.

9. b. No thorns? Go to 11.



10. a. Groups of 5 oval leaves with serrated edges? It's Himalayan blackberry. →

10. b. Groups of 3 – 5 deeply toothed leaves? It's Evergreen (Cutleaf) blackberry.

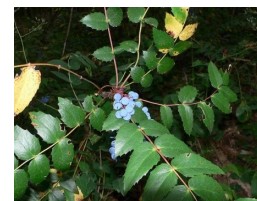


11. a. Does it have sharp spines along the edges of the leaves? It's holly. →

11. b. Not sharp spiky edges? Go to 12.

12. a. Does it have narrow, pointy leaves with obvious serrated edges? Oregon grape. ↓

12. b. Does it have fat, pointed leaves with slight serrations? It's salal. ↓





# Plants in Robinswood Park

## Big Leaf Maple



*acer  
macrophyllum*



How to recognize: 5 fingered leaves, seeds are double-winged samaras ("helicopter seeds"), bark has grooves and ridges, often hosts moss and lichen

How big: up to 100 feet tall, branches spread up to 50 feet wide, leaves up to 12 inches in diameter.

What kind of plant: deciduous tree

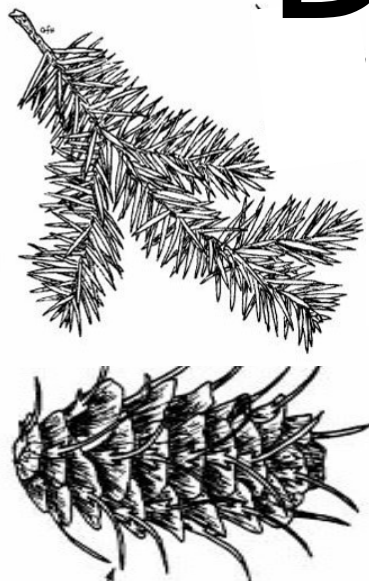
Where do they grow: west coast; second most common tree in Pacific Northwest





## Plants in Robinswood Park

# Douglas Fir



*Pseudotsuga menziesii*

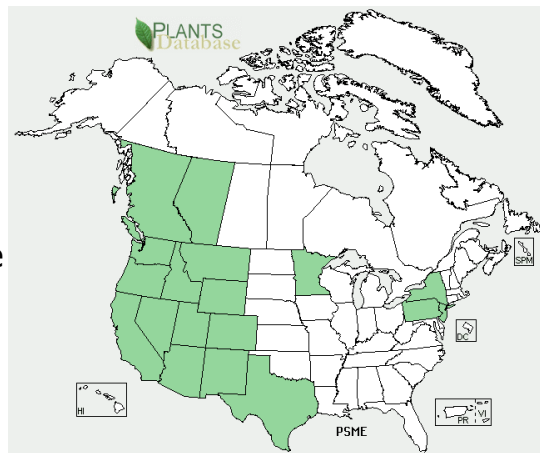
Evergreen coniferous tree

Look for: Single green needles, 1 inch long, encircle the stem. Soft, flexible.

Cones up to 4 inches. Bracts (shaped like mouse tails) protect the seeds.

Bark thick, rough, and deeply furrowed on mature trees.

How big: up to 300 feet tall (second tallest trees in the world), trunk as wide as 4 to 5 feet. Live 500—1000 years. (Douglas firs have been around since the time of the dinosaurs.)

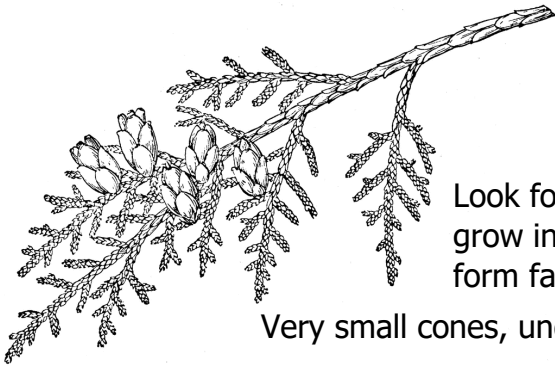


Uses: Deer, elk, and rodents eat young seedlings and saplings. Chipmunks, mice, shrews squirrels, and birds eat seeds. Northern spotted owls and red tree voles live in large Douglas Firs. Historically, native Americans used for building, basket, and medicine. Modern Americans use for: Houses, furniture, fences, flooring, paper, and Christmas trees.



## Plants in Robinswood Park

# Western Red Cedar



*Thuja plicata*

Evergreen coniferous tree

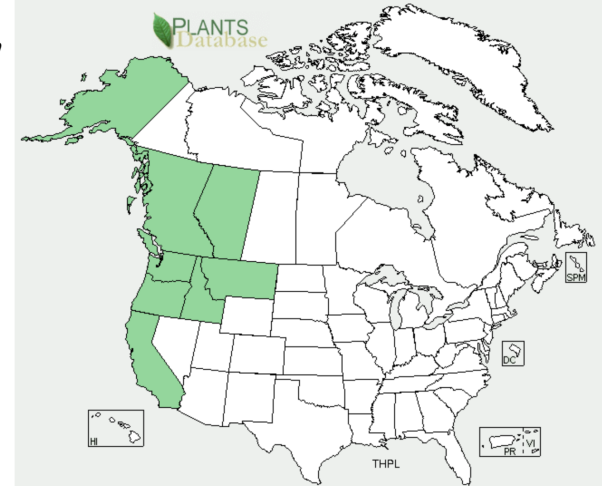
Look for: Tiny, flat, needles that grow in alternating pairs, that form fan-shaped sprays.

Very small cones, under 1 inch long.

Stringy bark that pulls off in long strips.

Can be up to 200 feet tall, 10 feet around. Can live 1000 years. Bark and needles have a distinctive smell.

Find it: Grows in moist areas, in shade of other trees. Often near Douglas Firs.

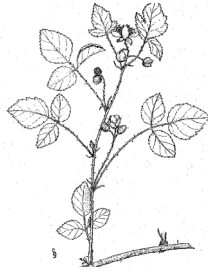


Uses: Deer eat the needles. Birds such as robins and cedar waxwings also eat cedar. Golden cheeked warblers make their nests from cedar bark. Historically, Native Americans used it to build houses, canoes, boxes, clothes. Modern Americans use it for roof shingles, fences, boxes, perfumes and insecticides.



# Plants in Robinswood Park

# Blackberries



## Trailing Blackberry

*Rubus macropetalus*

Native.

How to recognize:

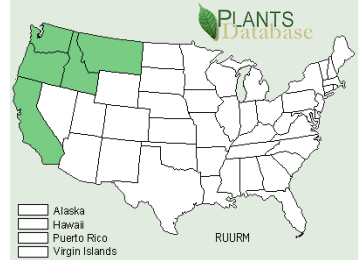
Trails along the ground, up to 25 feet spread. Height less than 20 inches.

Stems: slender (1/4"), hairless or slightly prickly.

Leaves are egg-shaped with points, roughly toothed and slightly hairy on both sides. Leaves alternate along the stem, and usually come in 3 leaf clusters, with the center leaf the biggest.

Flowers white. 5 petals.

Bloom in April to July. Berries in August.



## Non-Native Blackberries

Noxious Weeds in King County.

How to recognize: bushes up to 10' tall, in thickets 5—50' long.

Stems are thick—up to 3/4", reddish brown, with stiff thorns.

### Himalayan Blackberry, *rubus armeniacus*

How to recognize: Leaves are oval with serrated edges, in groups of 5 leaves. Dark green on top, gray-green on the bottom.



### Evergreen (Cutleaf) Blackberry, *rubus laciniatus*

Backs of leaves are hairy, 3—5 leaves per stem, deeply "toothed" leaflets, with jagged tips.





# Comparing Blackberry Leaves



**Trailing**  
(Cluster of 3)



**Himalayan**  
(Cluster of 5)



**Evergreen**  
("Cut-leaf")

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## Beware Stinging Nettle!



How to recognize:

Plant is 3—7' tall.

Leaves paired on the stem, 2 –5" long.

Leaves & stems are very hairy. Some of those hairs will sting!

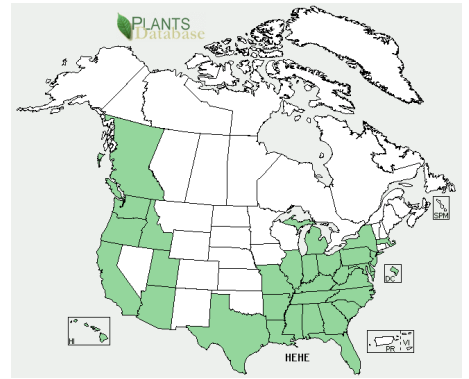
If stung, rub with spores on the back of sword fern leaves, or crush some nettle stems and apply the juice. Or use aloe vera gel, baking soda and water, diaper rash ointment or toothpaste.





# Plants of the Month: December

## English Ivy



*Hedera helix*

Not Native / Invasive. Evergreen.

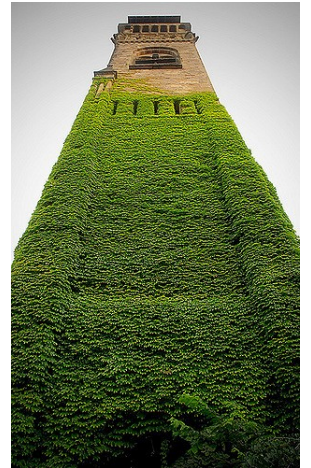
How to recognize: Climbing shrub (can climb almost anything.) If there's nothing to climb, it will trail on the ground

Leaves: Dull green, lighter colored veins, grow alternately along the stems. 5 lobes.

Vines exude a glue-like substance that lets them stick to almost any surface. Older vines can be as thick as 5 inches.

Flowers: Small yellow green flowers in the fall.

Berries: Small, dark purple-black berries in late winter / early spring, mildly toxic to humans.



English ivy is an invasive plant, considered a noxious weed in King County. It can crowd out other plants, and because of its shallow roots, it doesn't protect from erosion and landslides like other plants can. It can damage walls and fences. When it climbs a tree, the tree is more likely to have rot and disease, and more likely to blow over in a windstorm.



# Plants in Robinswood Park

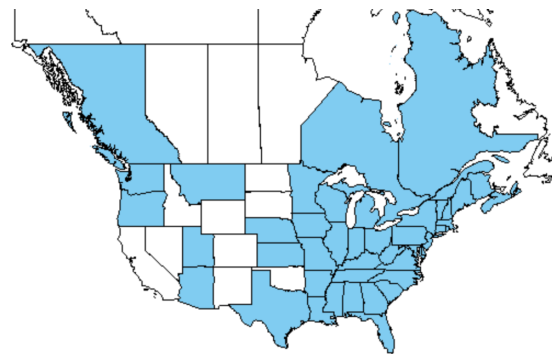
## Vinca



*Vinca minor*

a.k.a. common periwinkle

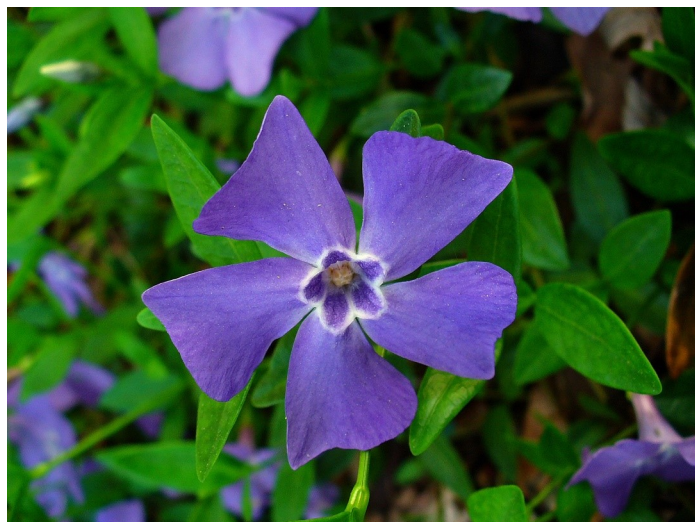
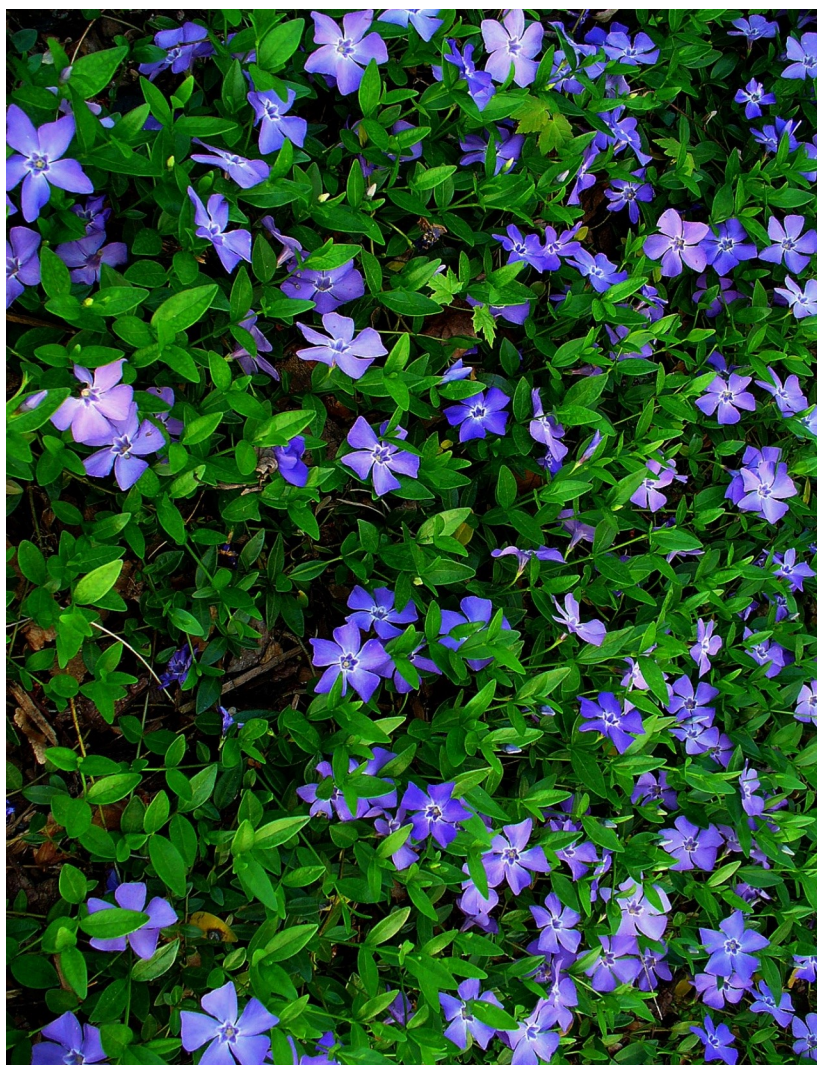
Non-native, evergreen, ground cover



Leaves: Glossy green, oval, taper to a point. Green all year round.

Flowers: Usually purple, sometimes white. 5 petaled. Lots in spring, some all year round.

Grows as ground cover—spreads out along the ground. Often in shady areas.



Uses: Ornamental. Used to make vincristine, a chemotherapy medication used to treat cancer.



# Plants in Robinswood Park

## Indian Plum



*Oemleria*  
a.k.a. osoberry or skunk bush  
Deciduous shrub. Native.



Leaves come out early in spring. Bright lime green, darken in summer, turn yellow in fall. If you crush, they smell like cucumber or watermelon rind.

Flowers in March or April. Whitish green bell / pendant shape. Clusters of ~10 blossoms. Female flowers smell like cucumber. Male flowers smell bad.

Orange berries ripen to deep blue-black in early summer. Edible. Bittersweet.

Twigs are slender and green. Bigger branches are reddish / purplish brown.

5—20 feet tall. Grows straight in sunny places, arches in the shade.



Uses: Birds, rodents, deer, bear, foxes and coyotes, all eat the small, bittersweet fruits. (Birds usually eat them before humans can get to them!) Bees enjoy the nectar from the flowers. Fruit is edible. Native Americans ate berries fresh or dried, and made tea from the bark. They chewed twigs then mixed with oil to use as an anesthetic salve. The wood can be used for arrows, spoons, combs, carvings.

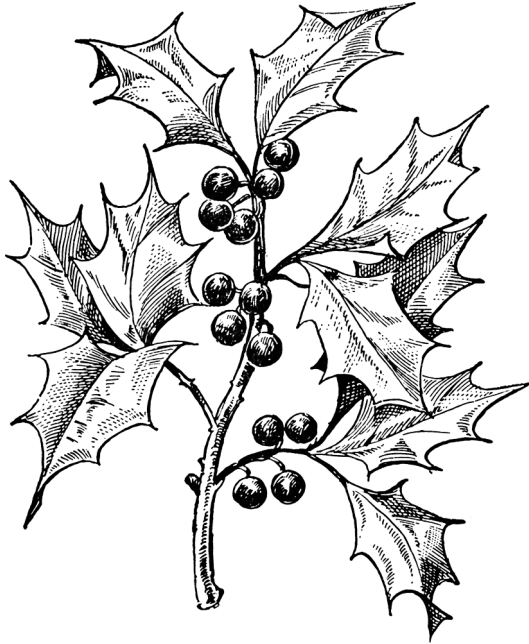
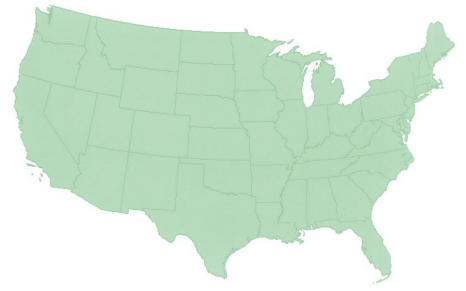


# Plants in Robinswood Park

## Holly

*Ilex*

Not Native. Evergreen.



How to recognize:

Grow in shrubs, typically 5—8 feet tall, but can range.

Leaves: Glossy. Dark green on top, lighter underneath, thick, stiff. Sharp spines along edge of leaves.

Stems:

Flowers: Inconspicuous greenish white flowers.

Berries: Bright red berries. Birds eat, but they're poisonous for children and pets. Eating even a handful can cause symptoms.





# Plants in Robinswood Park

## Oregon Grape



### *Mahonia aquifolium*

Native. Evergreen.

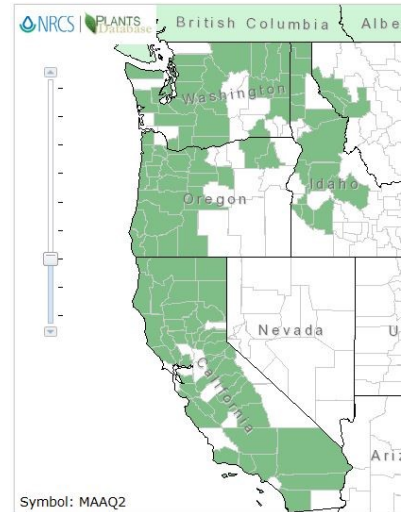
How to recognize: 2 feet tall.

Leaves glossy, green, serrated, paired. Sometimes confused with holly.

Stems reddish, slender.

Small golden flowers in spring

Blue berries, not glossy.



### Use

The blue fruits are edible but very tart (they improve after a frost.) Can be used in wine or jam.

Medicinal: antiseptic, stimulates liver and spleen.

In the garden, attracts hummingbirds.

Yellow roots can be used as dye.



# Plants in Robinswood Park



## Salal

*Gaultheria shallon*

Native. Evergreen.



How to recognize: Glossy dark green leaves, waxy with a leathery texture

New twigs are reddish green. Older branches grayish brown, and smooth.

Blossoms: Small bell-shaped flowers, pink to white. Slightly sticky and hairy. Appear in early summer.

Berries: Small, round, purplish black berries, hairy

Undergrowth in evergreen forest— 3 to 5 feet tall



### Uses:

The berries are edible. They can be eaten fresh, or dried and baked into cakes, or used for jam.

Leaves were chewed to suppress hunger or to flavor soup.

Pick a nice healthy leaf and roll it into a cone. It makes a natural "dixie cup."

© Dave Ingram



SE 22ND ST



151ST PL SE



148TH AVE SE



# Robinswood Park

SE 26TH

Please return this  
plant guide to  
this bench

