



Evergreen

INVASIVE PLANT PROFILE

Spurge-laurel, Daphne-laurel

Daphne laureola

Family: Thymelaeaceae Zone 7



EVERGREEN
Imagine your city with nature

Why is *Daphne laureola* a problem?

Daphne laureola is an evergreen shrub native to western and southern Europe. It is often purchased and planted as an ornamental shrub. It prefers loamy to clay soils that are well-drained and which range from neutral to acid. It is able to tolerate a range of conditions including dry to moist soil and full to partial shade. It reproduces via single-seeded berries. Birds which eat the berries of the shrub have helped distribute the plant beyond the garden. It can now be found in roadsides, and moist woods in lowland areas. *D. laureola* is also found at Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site of Canada and has come under the watchful eye of the Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team (GOERT). Its ability to grow in deep shade, its tolerance of a range of growing conditions and its ability to rapidly colonize an area has contributed to its invasion of natural spaces. Its growth as a monoculture in the forest understory means that it competes with and displaces native plants, resulting in altered native plant communities and natural succession, reduced biodiversity, and in some cases, potentially change soil chemistry. Reproduction by seed and distribution by birds has meant that controlling dispersal and growth of *D. laureola* is quite difficult.

Additional reproduction and growth information for *D. laureola* is fragmented, posing further challenges to preparing more comprehensive management plans. For example, it has been reported that *D. laureola* flowers in its second year, and can also sprout from lateral routes. Monitors of the Fort Rodd Hill site indicate that this reproduction and growth pattern is not evident at the site. Recent research indicates that the plant first produces seed at four years of age, which would be helpful in determining when to remove the plant. However, again, monitors at Fort Rodd Hill indicate that plants at this age have yet to flower.

For more information on *D. laureola* see <http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=DALA11>.

How is *Daphne laureola* controlled once a site is invaded?

Hand-pulling followed by planting of native species has been recommended in forest habitats and in areas where the plant occurs in lower densities. Ensure that small plants are pulled from moist soil. Larger plants should be cut as close to the ground as possible, and ideally in the summer. In some cases, especially where *D. laureola* occurs in higher density, cut plants beneath the soil, below the point where there is a visible colour change from brown stem to orange root. Parks Canada indicates that below-soil cutting is the most effective method. *Daphne* stems cut above the surface re-sprout after cutting and numerous seedlings may germinate so repeated site visits are necessary. When removing cut plants, wrap cuttings in tarps to avoid distributing berries to new sites.

The leaves, bark and fruit of *D. laureola* are quite toxic. When removing the plant by hand, remember to:

- Always wear gloves. The plant produces a noxious substance which can cause severe eye and skin irritation
- Never transport cuttings or plants inside an enclosed vehicle because noxious compounds can also cause respiratory irritation.
- Avoid home composting.

The District of Saanich is including *Daphne laureola* in its invasive species outreach program. It is also one of five key shrubs found to be invading Seattle parks and has been flagged as a species to be controlled and contained.



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Plant description

It has sweetly fragrant, greenish-white flowers that bloom February to April. Flowers grow in clusters among the leaves near the top of the stem, and are pollinated by bees, moths and butterflies. Leaves are glossy, leathery and oblong. They are alternate on the stem. *D. laureola* has egg-shaped, black berries which are poisonous. The shrub grows 0.5-1.8 m tall.

Market Alternatives

There are other plants which provide the benefits of *Daphne laureola*, including shade tolerance, evergreen ground cover, and berries for birds, without becoming invasive and a threat to local ecosystems.

- 1 **Evergreen huckleberry** *Vaccinium ovatum* This slow growing evergreen shrub has tiny green foliage that can turn bronze in winter. Small white bell-like flowers in spring are followed by dark blue edible berries. As a native it has high ornamental value in any planting. Suggested for a low hedge, foundation planting, woodland garden, background plant, specimen.

NATIVE SPECIES, SUN/PART SHADE, MOIST, 1.5-2M HIGH X 1-2M WIDE



- 2 **Salal** *Gaultheria shallon* This native evergreen shrub is one of the most common species found growing in the Pacific Northwest. Large glossy emerald green leaves are the dominant feature with small white bell-like flowers in spring followed by edible blue berries. Suggested for informal hedges, screens, woodland gardens, as a foundation plant or background plant and in native plant restoration.

NATIVE SPECIES, PART SHADE/SHADE, DRY/MOIST, 1-5M TALL AND WIDE



- 3 **Dull Oregon grape** *Mahonia nervosa* This short evergreen shrub or groundcover shows clusters of yellow flowers from May – June followed by blue/purple grape-like berry clusters. Dull Oregon grape is suitable in dry to moist shade and when planted in masses creates a beautiful evergreen carpet especially suitable under conifer trees.

NATIVE SPECIES, PART SHADE/SHADE, DRY-MOIST, 60CM TALL AND WIDE



- 4 **Winter daphne** *Daphne odora* For those looking for plants that have the Daphne look this evergreen shrub can be recommended. It is very similar in habit to the *Daphne laureola*. The highly fragrant flowers bloom in winter. The flowers and evergreen nature of this plant makes it an attractive choice for a garden yet it is unpredictable and can die unexpectedly. Suitable in moist organic well drained soil.

PART SHADE/SHADE, MOIST, 60CM – 1M TALL



- 5 **Sword fern** *Polystichum munitum* A low maintenance plant for the West Coast garden, this evergreen fern can grow under cedar trees and in deep shade with little or no watering. It will also provide year-round interest. Sword fern is suitable for large plantings, woodland gardens, under trees, forest restoration and erosion control.

NATIVE SPECIES, PART SHADE/SHADE, DRY/MOIST, 50CM-1.5M TALL



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