Conifers, Trees, and Shrubs require the least maintenance of any group of plants. As long as their mature size is accommodated by the space they are in, little to no maintenance should be expected once established. Andromeda Pieris dt Aucuba Azara microphylla dt Bottle Brush Callistemon dt Box Honeysuckle Lonicera nitida dt Broom Genista dt Butterfly Bush Buddleia (sterile hybrids) dt California Lilac Ceanothus dt Camellia Cedar Calocedrus (dwarf varieties) dt Cedar Cedrus (dwarf varieties) dt Cinquefoil Potentilla dt Cotoneaster dt Crape Myrtle Lagerstroemia dt Daphne dt Escallonia dt False Cypress Chamaecyparis (NOT Lawsoniana) Fatshedera Fothergilla Fringe Flower Loropetalum dt Heavenly Bamboo Nandina dt Hebe dt Hemlock Tsuga (dwarf varieties) dt Japanese Aralia Fatisia japonica Japanese Cedar Cryptomeria Japanese Maple Acer palmatum, dt Juniper Juniperus dt Lilac Syringa (dwarf types) dt Manzanita Arctostaphylos (hardy varieties) dt Mexican Orange Choisya dt Mimosa Tree Albizia ‘Summer Chocolate’ dt Oregon Grape Mahonia dt Osmanthus dt Pine Pinus (dwarf varieties) dt Rhododendron dt Rock Rose Cistus dt Silverberry Eleagnus dt Silverbush Convolvulus coeruleus dt Smoke Bush Cotinus dt Spruce Picea (dwarf varieties) dt Strawberry Tree Arbutus unedo dt Tea Tree Leptospermum dt Twiggy Dogwood Cornus Viburnum (tutus and davidii) dt Witch Hazel Hamamelis Yew Taxus dt Yucca dt NW Natives have a reputation as being uniformly low maintenance. Here are some of the easiest to grow. Deer Fern Blechnum Spicant dt Kinnikinnick Arctostaphylos uva-ursi dt Oregon Grape Mahonia dt Oregon Myrtle Umbellularia californica dt Oregon Stonecrop Sedum oreanum dt Pacific Wax Myrtle Myrica californica dt Red Flowering Currant Ribes Sanguninum dt Red Osier Dogwood Cornus Sericea dt Salal Gaultheria shallon dt Silk Tassel Garrya Elliptica dt Sword Fern Polystichum Munitum dt Vine Maple Acer Circinatum dt Grasses are a remarkably uniform group with respect to the amount of maintenance required. Deciduous grasses need to be cut back once a year in February. Most years, evergreen grasses need at least some grooming at the same time. Grasses which reseed readily should be avoided to minimize weeding. Blue Oat Grass Helictotrichon dt Feather Grass Stipa (short lived) Fountain Grass Pennisetum (not ‘moudry’) Maiden Grass Miscanthus Pampas Grass Cortaderia Pheasant Grass Anemanthele dt Rush Juncus Sedge Carex Perennials as a group require generally more maintenance. They will likely need some deadheading during the growing season, cutting back in the fall, and dividing of vigorous spreaders. That being said, here are some sturdy perennials which require very little tending while still looking good over a long season. Perennials grow quickly, making a garden appear mature sooner. Barrenwort Epimedium dt Blanket Flower Gaillardia dt (lives 2-3 years) Candytuft Iberis dt Cone Flower Echinacea dt Cyclamen (cum and hederifolium) dt Daffodil Narcissus dt Edibles as a group require a lot of maintenance and should be avoided if low maintenance is a priority, however, the following ones may be left alone and harvested from as desired. Alpine Strawberry dt Artichoke dt Asian Pear dt Asparagus (cut back in fall) Bay Laurel dt (protected site) Blueberry dt Daylily Hemerocallis dt Dusty Miller dt Elephant Ears Bergenia (dt in shade) False Indigo Baptisia dt False Plumbago Ceratostigma Plumbaginoides dt Gayfeather Liatris dt Geranium Hosta Hyssop Agastache Iris Jerusalem Sage Phlomis dt Lenten Rose Heliebornus dt Liberty dt Lithodora dt Mondo Grass Ophiopagon dt Paralehe dt Peony Paeonia Pincushion Flower Sambosa dt Sage Salvia dt Spruce Euphorbia (not reseeders) dt Stonecrop Sedum (short varieties) dt Wall Flower Erysimum dt
Low Maintenance

Plants for gardens which require minimal care

ESTABLISHING LOW MAINTENANCE PLANTS

The future success of a low maintenance planting is heavily dependent on the growth of deep roots during the first couple seasons. Some prep work is essential, and the following are required in order to grow plants that can survive on their own in the future.

- Choose plants carefully; the right plant grows to an appropriate size for the space and thrives in the amount of light and water found there.
- Prior to planting, turn a couple inches of compost and some slow release fertilizer into the planting area.
- The first season, new plantings have no deep roots and need water about once a week in warm, dry weather, delivered by a slow drip (soaker hose) over several hours (this is an estimate, never water if the soil hasn’t dried out at least a couple inches down). If drought tolerant plants have been chosen, then second year plantings may only need water 5 or 6 times, and the third year little or none.
- Spread 1-3” of compost on the soil surface every year to hold in moisture and keep improving the soil.

*These are the lowest maintenance fruit trees for the PNW, however they still require annual pruning, climbing a ladder to harvest all the fruit, and may require spraying.

GETTING STARTED

Low maintenance suggests plants characterized by their ability to look good without much input from the gardener. These plants are adaptable to a variety of soils and light levels, and require minimal pruning, grooming, deadheading, staking, fertilizing, and dividing. This is the definition used to choose the following plants; neither the definition nor the plant list is intended to be complete. Drought tolerance is of paramount importance in some low maintenance gardens, but in others water is readily available, therefore, drought tolerant plants will be marked with dt.

All plants need good care at planting time and through the first season at least, see the back panel for more info.

Choosing low maintenance plants is one way to minimize garden maintenance, but there are also other considerations, including the following.

- Replace lawn with hardscaping or less demanding ground covers.
- Use tough spots like dry shade or boggy areas for garden ornaments or patio space.
- Carefully designed hardscaping can help make a statement with fewer plants, which means less maintenance.

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