



Wild Floral Greens: A Brief Introduction to Harvesting and Marketing Floral and Decorative Products for Commercial Use from Small Private Forestlands in the Pacific Northwest

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Box 1. Floral products found in Pacific Northwest Forests

Evergreen boughs/cones

- Douglas-fir
- Grand fir
- Holly
- Incense cedar
- Noble fir
- Ponderosa pine cones
- Port Orford cedar
- Subalpine fir
- Sugar pine cones
- Western redcedar
- White pine

Floral greenery

- Azalea
- Beargrass
- Chinkapin
- Coffeeberry
- Deer fern
- Evergreen huckleberry
- Manzanita
- Myrtle
- Oceanspray
- Oregon boxwood
- Oregon grape
- Pennyroyal
- Scotch broom
- Salal
- Sword fern

Other floral products

- Cattail
- Chestnut hulls
- Curly willow
- Horsetail
- Moss
- Moth mullein
- Pearly everlasting
- Pussy willow
- Teasel
- Vine maple
- Wild oat
- Wild grasses
- Wild rose hips
- Yarrow

Overview

Wild plants, stems, leaves, cones, boughs, berries, and other forest products have been a big part of the floral and decorative industry in the Pacific Northwest since the 1930s.

Currently over 20,000 tons of floral products are collected from regional forests each year. Most of these products are harvested from large, private industrial forestlands or the vast public (federal, state, local) forests. However, small private forestland owners can also earn supplemental income from the sale of floral and decorative products harvested from their land. This factsheet provides a brief overview of the floral products that might be found on small private forestlands, possible market outlets for products, and important considerations when embarking on a business selling floral greens.



Floral arrangement and decorative squirrel made from wild floral greens.

What are Wild Floral Products?

Wild floral products broadly include plants, fungi, lichen, molds, mosses and liverworts. There are hundreds of species with commercial value in the floral industry. These floral products are used in Christmas wreaths and other holiday decorations, flower arrangements and bouquets, and for other craft and decorative uses, such as basketry. Box 1 lists a sample of some products that can be found in Pacific Northwest forests.

Market Potential

The wild floral greens market constitutes a multimillion dollar industry in the Pacific Northwest. Much of the purchasing and distribution to markets is done by a handful of large, well-established corporations. Although a small forestland owner may not be able to compete with these companies on bulk national and international distribution, there are many niche markets and strategies where smaller scale distribution can occur. You could start out by approaching local florists, wreath-makers, basket-makers, and other crafters and offering samples of your raw or value-added products. You can sell your value-added products directly to consumers or retail outlets such as holiday and craft shows or a farmers' market booth. Selling your products to wholesalers (e.g., wholesale flower markets) is another possibility; however, unless you have a large supply of product, direct marketing will likely to be more profitable. Online sales via sites such as Etsy, eBay and Amazon Marketplace provide infrastructure and networking to help reach markets across the county. Small, higher-value products with a good shelf life and that ship easily are especially good candidates for these online systems.

Steps to Get Started

Start by matching what florists want with what you have on your property. You can look on-line to find what types of greens are sold by wholesale suppliers, and then inventory your property. If you already plan to have professional botanists or timber cruisers come to your land to do a conservation easement, timber management plan or other assessment you might be able to give them a list of floral products you want inventoried. You can also do a simple inventory yourself with the help of a plant field guide. Mark the locations commercial species occur as best you can on a map and use a digital camera to take picture of each specimen from different angles and distances. In your notes write exact times pictures were taken so that you can easily match your pictures with your notes later (most digital cameras record the time a picture was taken). You can then take or email the pictures of specimens you are uncertain about to buyers, your local forestry extension agent, or another expert to help you positively identify the species. Another option is to hire a professional floral greens harvester to help you identify species with commercial value. Visit local florists to see what they are selling and if there is any interest in buying from you. Bring samples of your products. Most wholesale buyers will generally want large, consistent volumes of product, so unless you have a large volume, you may want to stick with smaller, more direct markets. Box 2 lists important information you will need to know from a buyer.



Decorative artist's conk (*Ganoderma applanatum*), a hard fungus found growing on trees

Some ways to maximize your profit include adding value to your raw product (such as making garlands from boughs); forming a cooperative (for example, Oregon Woodland Cooperative members join together to harvest and market evergreen boughs); selling dried products to reduce spoilage, increase shelf life, and lower shipping costs; and creating a niche for your product (perhaps marketing for quality, local, sustainable practices). Note that some products are seasonal, such as evergreen boughs for Christmas wreaths, while others such as sword fern have a year-round demand. If your own labor is limited, you could contract with a professional harvester. If you have someone else harvesting on your property, have liability coverage (or ensure that they do). Run your idea by your local extension agent for feedback and advice.

Box 2. Questions to ask a potential buyer:

1. How much product they want (minimum volume) over what timeframe
2. What season or dates (if any) they need the product
3. Level of freshness required
4. Specific dimensions (e.g., length, size) and color
5. Processing and packaging requirements
6. Acceptable level of damage from disease, insects or handling



Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*), a common forest species used as a floral green.

Additional Resources

- Julie Barnes video demonstrating the use of wild floral greens in a flower arrangement. IFCAE production 2011. <http://vimeo.com/30326310>
- Schlosser, W.E., C.T. Roche, K. Blatner, and D.M. Baumgartner. 1997. A guide to floral greens. Washington State University Cooperative Extension.
- Schnepf, C.C. 1992. Special Forest Products. Alternative Agricultural Enterprises: Production, Management and Marketing. University of Idaho Cooperative Extension. Available online at: <http://www.cals.uidaho.edu/edcomm/pdf/CIS/CIS0952.pdf>

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