

Checklist

Wild Plants of Cypress Island

Natural Resources Conservation Area

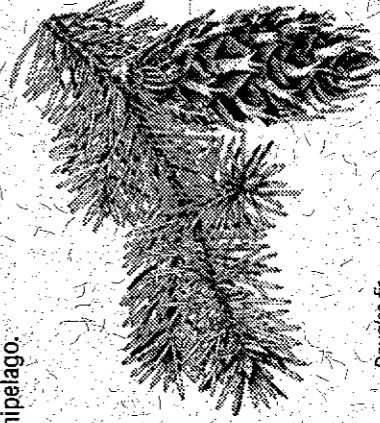


ROCKY MOUNTAIN JUNIPER

Cypress Island - Early Botanical Survey

The flora of Cypress Island has been sporadically documented over the last 200 years, including a brief survey by renown naturalist Archibald Menzies who, traveling with Captain George Vancouver on his voyage of Discovery, anchored off Cypress on June 8, 1792. Menzies wrote in his journal, "The island of Cypress is principally composed of high rocky mountains, and steep perpendicular cliffs ... the space between the foot of the mountains and the sea-side is occupied by low marshy land, through which are several small runs of most excellent water..." On botanizing nearby, Menzies remarked, "...it produced a pleasing variety of the objects of my pursuit & added considerably to my Catalogue of Plants."

Some say the Rocky Mountain juniper was identified as a cypress tree by members of Vancouver's expedition. It is a member of the cypress family, and the tree after which Cypress Island was named. Rocky Mountain juniper is unusually abundant on Cypress and is only occasionally found on other islands in the San Juan Archipelago.



Douglas-fir

Glaciation And Serpentine Soil

The Cypress Island NRCA remains essentially the rugged environment described by Menzies in part because of its remote location and relative inaccessibility. Historically, glaciation of Cypress carved the predominately steep and mountainous terrain now dominated by coniferous forests interspersed with grassy balds, rocky outcroppings, and small wetlands.



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* USDA, NRCA 1999. **The PLANTS database** (<http://plants.usda.gov/plants>). National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, LA 70874-4490 USA

References:

* Hitchcock, C.L., Cronquist, A., Ownby, M., and Thompson, J.W. **Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest**. 1969.

* Kartesz, John, **A Synonymized Checklist of the Vascular Flora of the United States, Canada, and Greenland** (1980).

* USDA, NRCA 1999. **The PLANTS database** (<http://plants.usda.gov/plants>). National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, LA 70874-4490 USA

Surveys by Arnett (1994), Bigley (1992), Bill (1991), Chappell (1997 & 1999), Gunter (1999), Kemp & Davenport (1996), Kruckeberg (1967), Mitchell & Corrigan (1999), and Schuller (1989) were consulted.

People needing this information in an alternative format may call (360) 856-3500 or TTY (360) 856-1371

Check our Web site: <http://www.wa.gov/dnr>

• Olympia Headquarters

1111 Washington St. SE,

PO Box 47000

Olympia, WA 98504-7000

Tel: (360) 902-1000

Check our Web site: <http://www.wa.gov/dnr>

DNR OFFICES

For more information about the Cypress Island Natural Resources Conservation Area contact:

• Northwest Region

919 N Township St.

Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284-9395

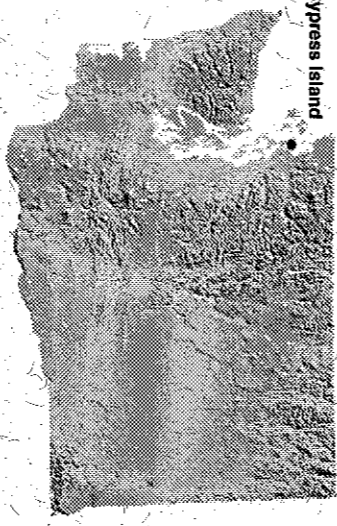
TTY: (360) 856-1371 Tel: (360) 856-3500

The Wild Plants of Cypress Island Checklist is a work in progress. To date, 264 species of plants, both native and non-native, have been documented as occurring on Cypress Island. This is not a complete list, as some areas have yet to be surveyed. This brochure is being published to encourage your participation in completing this project. We hope you will use the checklist on your outings to Cypress. When you encounter a plant not yet listed please send that information, including your name, address, date of sighting, species seen and where, to Wild Plants of Cypress Island Checklist, P.O. Box 3081, Friday Harbor, WA 98250.

HELP US COMPLETE THIS CHECKLIST

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages over 3800 acres of woodlands, wetlands, grassy balds, and rocky shoreline on Cypress Island as a Natural Resources Conservation Area (NRCA) open for hiking and camping at designated campgrounds. An additional 1073 acres of Cypress are protected as a Natural Area Preserve (NAP) providing the highest level of protection for Washington's natural heritage and access for approved scientific research and educational visits. The island is located just northwest of Anacortes in northern Puget Sound and is accessible by private boat.

CYPRESS ISLAND NRCA & NAP



Cypress Island

Open Rocky Outcrops

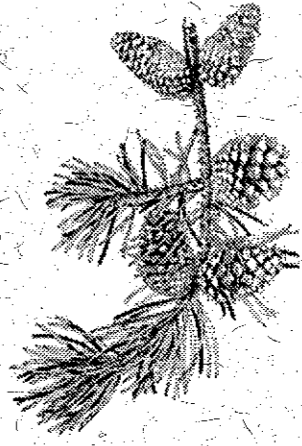
Plant communities here are predominately herbaceous; lichens and mosses cover the most exposed sites, with Rocky Mountain juniper and Pacific madrone also present. Camas and death camas, nodding onion, stonecrop, and harsh paintbrush are among the wild plants that bloom here in the spring.

Grasslands

Perennial grasses, most notably Idaho (Roemer's) fescue, are found within some open grassy balds on the island. Many native wildflowers are confined to this habitat which is imperiled in western Washington. These areas may be extremely sensitive and care should be taken to observe all site-sensitive signage and seasonal closures.

Wetlands

Small wetlands and shallow ponds occur mostly in the north and central portions of Cypress. Pond lily, Baltic rush, mare's-tail, cattail, slough sedge, and Labrador tea are all present, and Pacific willow, western crabapple, and black cottonwood may be found along the fringe. Seaside arrowgrass and red fescue, usually associated with saltmarshes, are also found here possibly due to the influence of serpentine derived soils.



Lodgepole/Share pine

Natural Treasure

Cypress Island is a natural treasure supporting a diversity of significant natural features that are becoming rare in western Washington. We hope you enjoy your stay, and we encourage you to tread lightly while moving about the island. A Trail Guide and Bird Checklist are also available to enhance your visit to this unique natural environment.

The presence of serpentine soils throughout the southern two-thirds of the island contributes to a distinctive growth of vegetation both in the forests and in wetlands with serpentine parent materials.

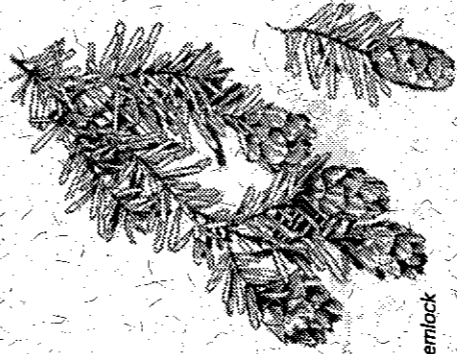
In general the chemistry of these soils results in vegetation which is characterized by stunted growth, an open tree layer, increased biomass at the lower levels of growth, and increased dominance of conifers, especially pines.

Understory areas which exhibit serpentine characteristics are generally open. Indian's dream fern is a good indicator of serpentine soils. Cypress Island NRCA is one of only two protected low-elevation serpentine sites within Washington state.

Forests

Cypress Island is dominated by Douglas-fir, a common forest species in the Puget lowlands. Old growth is most often found on broad ridges and northerly slopes with sufficient glacial deposition and soil moisture to support prolonged growth. Western redcedar and western hemlock grow in association with Douglas-fir here.

Wet shaded areas of protected valleys support red alder, black cottonwood and big-leaf maple among other species, with sword fern, salmonberry, red elderberry and a variety of herbaceous plants in association.



Western hemlock

