

Light Level

Is your area sunny or shady?

How to determine sun and shade in your area

The Sun's movement across the sky is quite pronounced in areas with high latitude. Here's how it changes through the year. The Sun shifts about 90° from SW (winter) to NW (summer), with a much higher arc in summer. This leads to long daylight hours in the summer (around 16 hours) and short days during the winter (about 8 hours).

What are the different light levels?

- Areas have full sun, part shade, or shade depending on the **hours of direct light**.
 - 6+ hours = **full sun**
 - 3-6 hours = **part shade**
 - <3 hours = **shade**

What affects light levels?

- **Garden orientation.** South-facing gardens get the most sun. North-facing areas may be shaded most of the year.
- **Nearby structures and trees.** If tall buildings or trees are to your south, they'll create significant shade, especially in winter. If they're east or west, they'll mostly block morning or afternoon sun.

How do I check if my areas has full sun?

- **Observe shadows:** go outside every few hours on a sunny day and note where shadows fall.
- **Look at sun exposure in June**
- **Track sun's path.** Apps like [Sun Seeker](#) or [Sun Surveyor](#) help visualize the Sun's movement in your exact location.

**Go Natives!
Website**

<https://gonativesnursery.com/>

[King County Native Plant Guide](#)

[How Much Sun Do I Get? Guide to Sunlight Assessment in the Garden.](#)
[Alabama Extension](#)

[Currin and Merritt, 2023. The Pacific Northwest Native Plant Primer](#)

Plants For All Light Levels

Full sun



kinnikinnick

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi

Groundcover, red fall fruits



red flowering currant

Ribes sanguineum

Shrub, showy spring flowers



red columbine

Aquilegia formosa

Perennial, hummingbirds

Part Shade



salal

Gaultheria shallon

Groundcover, evergreen



evergreen huckleberry

Vaccinium ovatum

Shrub, edible fruits



bleedingheart

Dicentra formosa

Perennial, pollinators

Shade



Oregon wood-sorrel

Oxalis oregana

Groundcover, fast-growing



Oregon-grape

Mahonia nervosa

Shrub, evergreen



sword fern

Polystichum munitum

Perennial, iconic fern

See Full Sun Plants Handout

See Part Shade Plants Handout

See Shade Plants Handout