

UNCLASSIFIED HERBACEOUS VEGETATION

Herbaceous vegetation dominated by native species that does not fit the types described elsewhere in this classification is known to exist within the ecoregion. Such stands of vegetation include unique local assemblages or stands that are poorly represented in our data for the Puget Trough. Much of the forb-dominated vegetation in the ecoregion (forbs much higher in cover than graminoids) occurs at a very small spatial scale within the context of balds or, less commonly, prairies. It is likely that such forb-dominated vegetation would have been more common in pre-Western settlement prairies due to the effects of aboriginal burning and digging.

These small-scale forb patches were initially not a focus of our sampling and have only become so in the last few years with the expansion of our sampling of herbaceous bald vegetation into adjacent montane ecoregions. For this reason, our samples from the Puget Trough are limited in number. Because these forb-dominated types are generally more common in the adjacent ecoregions, it is important that any classification of associations consider data from both areas. An association classification based on balds vegetation from western Washington has recently been completed: if you find yourself in balds habitat (shallow soils) and are unable to determine a good fit from the associations contained in this document, consult [Chappell \(2006\)](#).

Herbaceous Balds Vegetation (see [Chappell 2006](#))

Plant associations that have been identified within the Puget Trough, but are not described in this document, include the following list of associations described in Chappell (2006):

- ACLE *Achnatherum lemmonii*, Lemmon's needlegrass
- ARUV-FRVI-(FERO) *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi-Fragaria virginiana-(Festuca roemerii)*, Kinnikinnick-broadpetal strawberry-(Roemer's fescue)
- CAIN-ERLA *Carex inops-Eriophyllum lanatum*, Long-stolon sedge-woolly sunflower
- CAQU-TRHY *Camassia quamash-Triteleia hyacinthina*, Common camas-hyacinth triteleia
- MIGU-TRHY *Mimulus guttatus-Triteleia hyacinthina*, Yellow monkey-flower-hyacinth triteleia
- PLCO *Plectritis congesta*, Showy plectritis
- TRHY *Triteleia hyacinthina*, hyacinth triteleia

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Other vegetation types are possible within balds in the Puget Trough. For example, there is a small area dominated by Hood's sedge (*Carex hoodii*) near the top of Mount Constitution on Orcas Island. This vegetation type has not been seen elsewhere in western Washington.

Mesic to Wet Prairies

Seasonally wet prairies are another ecological system that is not covered by this classification because they are wetlands and because we have no data. Seasonally wet prairies are now very rare and known mostly from Lewis and Clark counties. One wet prairie plant association known to occur in Clark County, Washington, is *Deschampsia caespitosa – Danthonia californica* (tufted hairgrass – California danthonia) (Christy 2004, NatureServe 2005). The *Camassia quamash* (common camas) wet prairie association (Christy 2004) is another type that has been seen (in relatively degraded condition) in central Lewis County. Wet prairie areas dominated by dense sedge (*Carex densa*) have also been observed (F. Caplow pers. comm.) in the southern Puget Trough. A seasonally wet swale within an upland prairie (see Easterly et al. 2005) in Thurston County has several species in common with Willamette Valley wet prairies. The vegetation composition of this swale is very patchy and diverse.

Mesic prairies, less dry sites than our FERO-SERI association but not seasonally flooded or saturated, were undoubtedly once an important component of pre-Western settlement prairie landscapes in the ecoregion. They are now extremely rare and mostly degraded. Several of the remnant sites supporting the endangered golden paintbrush (*Castilleja levisecta*) are mesic prairie fragments (Chappell and Caplow 2004). Degraded mesic prairie fragments in Island County support lush herbaceous vegetation characterized by high abundance of foothill sedge (*Carex tumulicola*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) of unknown origin (nativity uncertain), Pacific sanicle (*Sanicula crassicaulis*), and non-native Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*) (Chappell and Caplow 2004).