

**QUERCUS GARRYANA / SYMPHORICARPOS ALBUS /  
CAREX INOPS**

Oregon white oak / common snowberry / long-stolon sedge

Abbreviated Name: QUGA/SYAL/CAIN

Synonym: *Quercus garryana* / *Symphoricarpos albus* /  
*Carex pensylvanica*

Sample size = 21 plots

**DISTRIBUTION:** Occurs more or less throughout the range of oak within the Puget Trough, including San Juan, Pierce, Thurston, Island, Clallam, Mason, Lewis, Grays Harbor and Clark counties. Occurs in southwestern BC also.

**GLOBAL/STATE STATUS:** G2S2. Most examples are very small or otherwise degraded. Few occurrences of good quality remain. Those that remain are highly threatened by non-native species, conifer encroachment, and development.

**ID TIPS:** Dominated by Oregon white oak. Common snowberry or tall Oregongrape dominate the understory and long-stolon sedge or other grassland/savanna herb species are present. Sword fern and moist-site herbs are absent or less abundant than grassland/savanna species.

**ENVIRONMENT:** These sites are dry to very dry and appear to be relatively nutrient-rich. Occurs on deep-soil coarse-textured glacial outwash plains, shallow soils over bedrock, or coarse-textured glacial till. Most common on flats or sunny aspects (south to west), but does occur on other aspects as well.

**Precipitation:** 21-54 inches (mean 42)

**Elevation:** 90-400 feet

**Aspect/slope:** S to NW/ 0-40% slope (mean 11)

**Slope position:** plain, mid, upper, short

**Soil series:** Spanaway, rockland, Hoypus, Nisqually

**DISTURBANCE/SUCCESSION:** In most stands, this association is probably the result of an increase of native understory shrubs in QUGA/CAIN-CAQU, or of oak invasion onto former prairies or savannas, in the absence of periodic fires. In the pre-Western settlement landscape, this type is hypothesized to have been rare or absent. In the absence of fire or active management, most of these stands are being invaded by Douglas-fir trees and are likely to convert to QUGA-PSME/SYAL/POMU and eventually to conifer forest.

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**Vegetation Composition Table (selected species):**

Con = constancy, the percent of plots within which each species was found;  
Cov = cover, the mean crown cover of the species in plots where it was found;  
+ = trace (< 0.5% cover). .

Trees	Kartesz 2005 Name	Con	Cov
Oregon white oak	<i>Quercus garryana</i> var. <i>garryana</i>	100	60
Douglas-fir	<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i> var. <i>menziesii</i>	38	9
Oregon ash	<i>Fraxinus latifolia</i>	29	6
Pacific madrone	<i>Arbutus menziesii</i>	10	2
<b>Shrubs and Dwarf-shrubs</b>			
common snowberry	<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i> var. <i>laevigatus</i>	95	37
tall Oregongrape	<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>	86	9
Scot's broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	76	9
serviceberry	<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	76	8
Indian plum	<i>Oemleria cerasiformis</i>	48	4
trailing blackberry	<i>Rubus ursinus</i> var. <i>macropterus</i>	43	5
oceanspray	<i>Holodiscus discolor</i>	29	14
beaked hazelnut	<i>Corylus cornuta</i> var. <i>californica</i>	14	9
<b>Graminoids</b>			
Kentucky bluegrass	<i>Poa pratensis</i>	86	13
long-stolon sedge	<i>Carex inops</i> ssp. <i>inops</i>	81	12
blue wildrye	<i>Elymus glaucus</i>	76	5
tall oatgrass	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	43	4
<b>Forbs and Ferns</b>			
common St. John's-wort	<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	76	3
cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>	57	2
Nuttall's peavine	<i>Lathyrus nevadensis</i> ssp. <i>lanceolatus</i> var. <i>pilosellus</i>	52	3
yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i> var. <i>occidentalis</i>	33	1
hairy cat's-ear	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	29	+
common shepherd's-cress	<i>Teesdalia nudicaulis</i>	29	1
big-leaved sandwort	<i>Moehringia macrophylla</i>	24	5
sword fern	<i>Polystichum munitum</i>	19	2

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**VEGETATION:** Woodland or forest dominated by Oregon white oak. The understory is dominated by medium-tall shrubs, most often common snowberry. Tall Oregon grape is usually present and occasionally dominates or co-dominates. Scot's broom and serviceberry are other very frequent shrubs. Oceanspray is occasionally co-dominant. Long-stolon sedge and the non-native Kentucky bluegrass are usually prominent in the herb layer. Blue wildrye, common St-Johns-wort, and cleavers are usually present. Other prairie-associated plant species may be present. Sword fern and moist-site forbs are rare or absent.

**CLASSIFICATION NOTES:** Chappell and Crawford (1997) describe this association from the southern Puget Sound area. In BC, Erickson (1996) recognizes multiple community types that have affinities to this association. On Fort Lewis (Pierce and Thurston counties), Thysell and Carey (2001), noted what they called an oak/native shrub type (site type 1) that may be intermediate in character between QUGA/CAIN/SYAL and QUGA-PSME/SYAL/POMU.

**MANAGEMENT NOTES:** Maintenance of this association requires monitoring and active control of Douglas-fir. Reintroduction of fire into this association should reduce shrub cover over time, and if sufficient native seed and viable tubers are in the soil, reestablishment of the even more imperiled, and more important from a conservation perspective, QUGA/CAIN-CAQU association appears to be possible. However, if native herbaceous component in the soil has been removed by past heavy grazing or too long a period of shrub suppression, then fire may facilitate a conversion of understory to non-native grasses and forbs.

**BIODIVERSITY NOTES:** State candidate slender-billed white-breasted nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis aculeata*) is dependent on oak woodland habitat. State threatened western gray squirrel (*Sciurus griseus*) requires oak woodland as one component of its habitat, and probably uses this association.



Chappell, C.B. 2006. Upland plant associations of the Puget Trough ecoregion, Washington. Washington Department of Natural Resources, Natural Heritage Program, Olympia, WA. <http://www.dnr.wa.gov/nhp/refdesk/communities/pdf/intro.pdf>.