Urban Landscape
The urban landscape is human-built. Interspersed with homes, offices, roads, and other infrastructure are yards, community green spaces, local parks and natural areas. Plant life in the urban landscape may benefit from additional stormwater runoff and added fertilizers, but it may also be subject to frequent disturbance and human manipulation. Because urban landscape plants can come from many different places, this list addresses common “volunteer” species in unmaintained areas.

Trees
- Smooth sumac (Rhus glabra)
- **Siberian elm (Ulmus pumila)
- **Russian-olive (Elaeagnus angustifolia)

Forbs (herbaceous flowering plants other than grasses)
- Russian-thistle (Salsola australis)
- **Lamb’s Quarters (Chenopodium album)
- **Kochia (Bassia sieversiana)
- **Bindweed (Convolvulus arvensis)
- **Wooly mullein (Verbascum thapsus)
- Common mallow (Malva neglecta)
- Curly cup gumweed (Grindelia squarrosa)
- Common sunflower (Helianthus annuus)
- **Prickly lettuce (Lactuca seriola)
- **Russian-thistle (Salsola australis)
- **Lamb’s Quarters (Chenopodium album)
- **Kochia (Bassia sieversiana)
- **Bindweed (Convolvulus arvensis)
- **Wooly mullein (Verbascum thapsus)
- Common mallow (Malva neglecta)
- Curly cup gumweed (Grindelia squarrosa)
- Common sunflower (Helianthus annuus)
- **Prickly lettuce (Lactuca seriola)
- **Cow-pen daisy (Ximenesia encelioides)
- **Yellow sweetclover (Melilotus officinale)
- **Prostrate spurge (Euphorbia maculata)
- **Purslane (Portulaca oleracea)
- **Curly dock (Rumex crispus)
- **Red-root pigweed (Amaranthus retroflexus)

Grasses
- **Cheatgrass (Anisantha tectorum)
- **Foxtail barley (Critesion glaucum)
- **Windmillgrass (Chloris verticillata)
- **Barnyardgrass (Echinochloa crus-galli)
- Crabgrass (Digitaria sanguinalis)
- Canada wildrye (Elymus canadensis)

Paintbrush (Castilleja integra) Blue Grama (Chondrosum gracile) Plains Cottonwood (Populus deltoides)

Shortgrass Prairie Ecosystem
Minimal rainfall (less than 15 inches a year), ever-present winds and a treeless landscape make up the shortgrass prairie. Plants here generally grow low to the ground, are drought tolerant and have extensive root systems.

Shrubs
- Rabbitbrush (Chrysothamnus nauseosus)
- *Fringed sage (Artemisia frigida)
- Snakeweed (Gutierrezia sarothrae)
- Four-winged saltbush (Atriplex canescens)
- Winterfat (Krascheninnikovia lanata)
- Yucca (Yucca glauca)

Forbs (herbaceous flowering plants other than grasses)
- Common sunflower (Helianthus annuus)
- Prairie sunflower (Helianthus petiolaris)
- Pasture sage (Artimisia ludoviciana)
- Gayfeather (Liatris punctata)
- Rocky Mountain beeplant (Cleome serrulata)
- Prairie baby’s breath (Eriogonum effusum)
- Prickly-pear cactus (Opuntia polyacantha)
- Buffalo gourd (Cucurbita foetidissima)
- Wavy-leaf thistle (Cirsium undulatum)
- Prickly poppy (Argemone polyanthemos)

Grasses
- Buffalograss (Buchloe dactyloides)
- Red three-awn (Aristida purpurea)
- Blue grama (Chondrosum gracile)
- Side oats grama (Bouteloua curtipendula)
- Western wheatgrass (Pascopyrum smithii)
- Switchgrass (Panicum virgatum)
- Big bluestem (Andropogon gerardii)
- Little bluestem (Schizachyrium scoparium)
- Prairie sandreed (Calamovilfa longifolia)
- Needle and thread (Hesperostipa comata)
- Sand dropseed (Sporobolus cryptandrus)

Lowland Riparian Ecosystem
The lowland riparian ecosystem is characterized by narrow bands of distinctive vegetation along the margins of streams, rivers, ponds, and lakes. It is lower in elevation, and often shaded from sun and wind by abundant trees and shrubs. All plant life here is governed and shaped by water.

Trees
- Plains cottonwood (Populus deltoides)
- Narrowleaf cottonwood (Populus angustifolia)
- Peach-leaved willow (Salix mygdaloides)

Shrubs
- Chokecherry (Padus virginiana)
- Golden currant (Ribes aureum)
- Wild plum (Prunus americana)
- Sandbar (coyote) willow (Salix exigua)
- Snowberry (Symphoricarpos occidentalis)

Forbs (herbaceous flowering plants other than grasses)
- Bul-rush (Schoenoplectus lacustris)
- Cattail (Typha sp.)
- Wild licorice (Glycyrrhiza lepidota)
- Showy milkweed (Asclepias speciosa)
- Scouring-rush (Hippochaete laevigata)
- **Poison hemlock (Conium maculatum)
- **Canada thistle (Cirsium arvense)
- **Carex sp.

Grasses
- **Cheatgrass (Anisantha tectorum)
- **Foxtail barley (Critesion glaucum)
- **Windmillgrass (Chloris verticillata)
- **Barnyardgrass (Echinochloa crus-galli)
- Crabgrass (Digitaria sanguinalis)
- Canada wildrye (Elymus canadensis)
What is an ecosystem?

An ecosystem is a biological community of living and non-living organisms interacting with each other and their environment. If you want to know which ecosystem you are in, sometimes the easiest thing to do is to look at and identify the plants around you.

Field identification of plants sometimes requires a detailed look at features such as leaves and blooms. If you find an unfamiliar plant, noting some of these details may help you identify it.

**Bold print** indicates a species that is an ecosystem identifier or ecosystem signature species.

*Star indicates a generalist species, found throughout most Aurora ecosystems.

**double star indicates non-native species**

To request a comprehensive Aurora plant list or to ask a plant ID question, please email nature@auroragov.org.

**Aurora Plants by Ecosystem**

**City of Aurora Plant Checklist**

**Ponderosa Woodland and Savanna Ecosystem**

As the name savanna implies, ponderosa pine forests are meant to be open, sunny, warm and dry. Lightning strikes and fires are common and beneficial here. Plants are relatively drought and fire resistant and tolerant of acidic soils.

**Trees**

- Ponderosa Pine (Pinus ponderosa scopulorum)

**Shrubs**

- Mountain-mahogany (Cercocarpus montanus)
- Three-leaved sumac (Rhus trilobata)
- Wild rose (Rosa woodsii)
- Yucca (Yucca glauca)
- Prickly-pear cactus (Opuntia polyacantha)
- Golden currant (Ribes aureum)

**Forbs** (herbaceous flowering plants other than grasses)

- Wild onion (Allium textile)
- Sand lily (Leucocrinum montanum)
- Blue-mist penstemon (Penstemon virens)
- Fairy trumpet (Ipomopsis aggregata)
- Dwarf mistletoe (Arceuthobium vaginatum)
- Pussytoes (Antennaria parvifolia)
- Spiderwort (Tradescantia occidentalis)
- Skullcap (Scutellaria brittonii)
- Bastard-toadflax (Comandra umbellata)
- Phlox (Phlox longifolia)
- Paintbrush (Castilleja integra)

**Chiming Bells** (Mertensia lanceolata)

**Lambert’s locoweed** (Oxytropis lambertii)

**What is an ecosystem?**

An ecosystem is a biological community of living and non-living organisms interacting with each other and their environment. If you want to know which ecosystem you are in, sometimes the easiest thing to do is to look at and identify the plants around you.

This checklist is abridged. Most occasional or rare species are not included. Plants are visible on a seasonal basis. To request a comprehensive Aurora plant list or to ask a plant ID question, please email nature@auroragov.org.