

## **The Evergreen Northwest by Rebecca Lexa**

During the cold months, many plants lose their leaves while they hibernate through winter. Yet we do have some notable exceptions that help keep the land green year-round. Most people know about evergreen conifer trees, of which we have several. Shore pine, which is a variation of lodgepole pine, grows at the edge of the dunes. Inland, it soon gives way to Sitka spruce, western hemlock, and western red cedar.

Beneath the canopy of the trees, the understory is full of green as well! The leathery leaves of salal persist throughout the winter, as do those of evergreen huckleberry. These two shrubs may grow higher than you are tall, and create a splash of color in forests and along roads. You might also see Pacific wax myrtle, which looks a little like a narrow-leaved rhododendron.

Closer to the ground you'll find a wide variety of ferns; western sword fern is by far the largest and most impressive, but keep your eyes open for others like deer fern and licorice fern. The ground will also be covered with the green of mosses soaking up the winter rains, and you might even find a liverwort or two near streams and other waterways.

Against this green backdrop, look for the white spheres of snowberries on bushes whose leaves have shed, and the red of western lily of the valley berries at your feet. You may even get to see small birds flitting through the underbrush, like chickadees, juncos and kinglets. Even in winter the land is alive!