

Growing Native Plants by Seed

Growing native plants is easy if you understand a few fundamentals.

The first challenge to growing native plants is overcoming seed dormancy. While the seeds of most garden vegetables require light, moisture, and warm soils to germinate, those conditions are not sufficient to grow native plants. Seeds from native plants need to be exposed to a cold, wet winter in order to germinate. This cold wet period is called “stratification”. Many of Oregon’s native plants have evolved to germinate in the spring, and the passing of four, cold, wet months is one cue used to tell them that spring has arrived. If the plants germinated in the fall, they could easily freeze and die over the winter.

Here is what you need to get started growing native plants:

- Step 1. Collect or purchase native seed (Beware! Many “wildflowers” may actually be non-natives).
- Step 2. Store seed in a paper bag in a cool, dry place until November. Seeds get moldy in plastic bags.
- Step 3. Fill seed trays / pots with special seed starting soil (baby roots don’t like chunky soil).
- Step 4. Wet the soil gently.
- Step 5. Scatter seed lightly over the surface (5 seeds per pot).
- Step 6. Add a very thin layer of soil on top of the seed (just enough to cover the seed).
- Step 7. Label your plant pots/trays with pencil (ink fades in the sun).
- Step 8. Set your pots / trays outdoors in a location that receives plenty of cold, wet weather.
- Step 9. Protect seeds from birds, squirrels, and large rain-drops by placing an old window screen or netting over the pots.
- Step 10. Watch for germination to occur in April or May (watch out for slugs!)
- Step 11. Keep your seedlings moist! This is where most people kill their plants since seedlings are very sensitive to drying out.
- Step 12. Transplant your seedlings into larger pots after 2 weeks. Leave only one plant per pot to give seedlings space for their roots to develop, or you will get a lot of dwarf, sickly plants.
- Step 13. Either keep the plants in a pot for a year or transplant them into your garden in May and give them plenty of water the first year.
- Step 14. Enjoy! Trade!

A note about seed collecting

Generally, you need a permit to collect seed on public land. You can purchase seed from specialty nurseries listed on the back, or you can request permission to collect seed on private land. When collecting seed, try to get a little seed from a large number of individuals, instead of lots of seed from one plant. Also, try to collect seed from multiple locations. This greatly increases the genetic diversity of your collection.

But I want to grow rare plants....

In short; practice with the common species first! Rare plants need all the help they can get, but when people collect seeds from wild plants, they are taking away the plant’s ability to sustain a healthy population. Also, you could be collecting from an inbred population, and spreading those plants around is counter productive to region-wide conservation goals. From a legal stand-point, you are not allowed to buy, sell, or transport endangered species.

Resources for Growing Native Plants

Native Plant Society of Oregon

Corvallis Chapter – Monthly meetings, workshops, and wildflower hikes www.NPSOregon.org

North American Rock Garden Society – a good source of seeds and books <http://www.nargs.org/>

OSU bookstore has the best selection of books for plant identification, gardening, etc.

Willamette Gardens

<http://www.willamettegardens.com/>

Retail by appointment only

Esther McEvoy

Corvallis, OR (541) 754-0893

Jonny Native Seed

Seeds of PNW native plants

www.jonnynativeseed.com

29632 Harvest Dr. SW

Albany, OR 97321

541-754-7938

Benton Soil & Water Conservation District -

<http://www.bentonswcd.org/>

Annual Plant Sale – order by Jan. 22 for February pickup

Heritage Seedlings

www.heritageseedlings.com

Wholesale

Salem, OR (503) 585-9835

Sevenoaks Native Nursery

<http://sevenoaksnativenursery.com/>

Wholesale

Albany, OR (541) 757-6520

Native Plant Network – directions for starting seed for many native species.

<http://www.nativeplantnetwork.org/network/>

Table 1. Native plants appropriate for the Benton County Area. Nectar species for Fender's blue butterfly are marked with a star (*). The unlisted nectar plants are slow growing bulbs, so those are best purchased or grown with great patience.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Duration	flower color	wet prairie	upland prairie	forest edge
California compassplant	<i>Wyethia angustifolia</i>	Perennial	yellow		X	
common madia	<i>Madia elegans</i>	Annual	yellow		X	
* dwarf checkermallow	<i>Sidalcea virgata</i>	Perennial	pink		X	
farewell to spring	<i>Clarkia amoena</i>	Annual	pink		X	
* field checkermallow	<i>Sidalcea campestris</i>	Perennial	pink	X		
fringe cup	<i>Tellima grandiflora</i>	Perennial	green			X
grand collomia	<i>Collomia grandiflora</i>	Annual	salmon	X	X	
lance selfheal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i> ssp. <i>lanceolata</i>	Perennial	purple		X	
* Oregon sunshine	<i>Eriophyllum lanatum</i>	Perennial	yellow		X	
showy milkweed	<i>Asclepias speciosa</i>	Perennial	pink	X	X	
slender cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla gracilis</i>	Perennial	yellow		X	
sticky cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla glandulosa</i>	Perennial	yellow	X		
western buttercup	<i>Ranunculus occidentalis</i>	Perennial	yellow		X	
western columbine	<i>Aquilegia formosa</i>	Perennial	red			X
yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Perennial	white		X	

Native plant photos

Additional photos under Nectar plant lists

Photos by IAE unless otherwise noted



California compassplant
(*Wyethia angustifolia*)



Common madia
(*Madia elegans*)



Farewell to spring
(*Clarkia amoena*)



Fringecup
(*Tellima grandiflora*)



Grande collomia
(*Collomia grandiflora*)



Lance selfheal
(*Prunella vulgaris* ssp.
lanceolata)



Showy milkweed
(*Asclepias speciosa*)



Slender cinquefoil
(*Potentilla gracilis*)



Photo: Bob Moseley @ USDA-NRCS
PLANTS Database

Sticky cinquefoil
(*Potentilla glandulosa*)



Western buttercup
(*Ranunculus occidentalis*)



Western columbine
(*Aquilegia formosa*)



Yarrow
(*Achillea millefolium*)

Fender's blue butterfly Nectar Plant Species



Fender's blue butterfly (Endangered)
(Plebejus icarioides fenderi)



Photo: Karen Fleck Harding
Tapertip onion
(Allium acuminatum)



Photo: Tom Kaye
Narrowleaf onion
(Allium amplexans)



Photo: Tom Kaye
Tolmie's mariposa lily
(Calochortus tolmiei)



Photo: Tom Kaye
Large camas
(Camassia leichtlinii)



Photo: Karen Fleck Harding
Small camas
(Camassia quamash)



Photo: Tom Kaye
**Clearwater
cryptantha**
(Cryptantha intermedia)



Photo: Tom Kaye
Oregon sunshine
(Eriophyllum lanatum)



Photo: Carolyn Menke
Oregon geranium
(Geranium oreganum)



Photo: Tom Kaye
Toughleaf iris
(Iris tenax)

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Nine-leaf lomatium
(*Lomatium triternatum*)



Seablush
(*Plectritis congesta*)



Photo: Tom Kaye
**Meadow
checkermallow**
(*Sidalcea campestris*)



Photo: Karen Fleck Harding
Rose checkermallow
(*Sidalcea malviflora ssp.
virgata*)



Photo: Dominic Maze
American vetch
(*Vicia americana*)

Taylor's Checkerspot butterfly Nectar Plant Species

(Species listed in order of butterfly preference)



Taylor's checkerspot (not listed but rare)
(*Euphydryas editha taylori*)

Photo: Tom Kaye



Photo: Tom Kaye
Virginia strawberry
(*Fragaria virginiana*)



Photo: Tom Kaye
Tolmie's mariposa lily
(*Calochortus tolmiei*)



Photo: Karen Fleck Harding
Seablush
(*Plectritis congesta*)