

NATIVE PLANT MASTER[®] PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION TO MANUAL

The purpose of the Native Plant Master manual is to provide a space for students to record information from Native Plant Master courses. For more information about plants taught in NPM courses, it is recommended that students visit the Colorado Plant Database which can be viewed at <http://coloradoplants.jeffco.us>. References for this database are listed in the back of this manual and also on the website.

Scientific names for plants taught in the Native Plant Master Program are from Colorado Flora: Eastern Slope, 3rd edition, and/or Colorado Flora: Western Slope, 3rd edition by William A. Weber and Ronald C. Wittmann.

It should be noted that any information about the edibility of plants is given strictly for historical purposes. We do not vouch for the safety of eating any plants or other human uses mentioned.

In addition to safety considerations, we do not recommend collection of any native plants or plant parts because this can negatively impact plant populations. A number of rare native plants have become classified as threatened or endangered because of human collection.

For more information about the Colorado Native Plant Master Program, see www.conativeplantmaster.org. The Native Plant Master Program is sponsored by Colorado State University Extension and is available in many counties across the state.

PROGRAM MISSION

The mission of the Native Plant Master Program is to educate the public about native plants in order to foster stewardship, sustainable landscaping and management of weeds that threaten native ecosystems.

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WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- ✓ **Sustainable landscaping using native plants can reduce the need for outside inputs including additional water, pesticides and maintenance.** Research demonstrates that landscapes including natives and adapted non-natives can reduce water usage by 60%.
- ✓ **Native plant communities are being drastically changed or destroyed at a significant rate.** Weeds have invaded 17 million acres of public lands in the West, quadrupling their range in 10 years. In Colorado, 17% of our native plant species have already been displaced.
- ✓ **Loss of native plant communities costs money.** Per the U.S. Department of Agriculture, noxious weeds cost the U.S. \$45 billion per year in damage to livestock and wildlife forage, weed eradication efforts, and reduction in property values.
- ✓ **Diverse native plant communities are a critical part of Colorado's wildlife habitats.** Native plants can be beneficial because they provide food and shelter for wildlife and maintain local biological diversity. Threats to native plant communities are also threats to Colorado's wildlife.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Become familiar with native plant communities and the weeds that threaten them by taking one or more Native Plant Master courses. Visit www.conativeplantmaster.org or call your local Extension office to learn more.
- Learn more about the identity, ecology and human uses of native and non-native plants by visiting the Colorado Plant Database that contains research-based information on over 1,000 species. See <http://coloradoplants.jeffco.us>.

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- Share the importance of conserving native plant communities by teaching others.
- Stay on the trail or road to prevent erosion, trampling, and compaction of the soil. Many noxious weeds gain a foothold in disturbed areas at the edges of trails and roadways.
- Picking blossoms prevents seed production for next year's native plants. Leave the native wildflowers for others to enjoy and keep the wildlife connections in place.
- Contact your local officials to learn which noxious weeds have been designated for control in your county. The Colorado Department of Agriculture determines which plants can be legally sold and planted locally through the Colorado Nursery Act.
- Restore Colorado's native plant communities yard by yard: landscape with native plants.
 - Since native plants are adapted to Colorado's conditions, they are hardy, use less water if sited appropriately and generally need less maintenance.
 - Native plants attract wildlife without costly, messy wildlife feeders that can change natural feeding habits and promote disease.
- Remove invasive, non-native plants from your garden. Many noxious weeds are escaped ornamental garden plants.
- Talk with your local garden center or nursery manager about the need for native plant conservation. Ask them to stock and promote native trees, shrubs, annuals and perennials.
- Ask local developers and your city council to promote landscaping with natives instead of non-native lawns and ornamentals. Development of property usually means loss of native plant communities.

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- Ask local developers and your city council to promote quick revegetation of development sites so weeds do not gain a foothold.
- Learn scientific names to avoid purchasing non-native plants or seed mixes. The word “native” is not regulated.
- Acquire your native plants from reputable nurseries that propagate from nursery-grown material. Leave seeds and plants in the wild so native plant communities remain intact.
- Learn ways to safely provide habitat for native pollinators. Many native bee and wasp populations are in decline. Native plants often need specific native pollinators to produce seed.

References:

“Wild Wealth: The Riches of Native Plants,” Native Plant Conservation Initiative.

“Weeds of Colorado Calendar,” Colorado Big Country Resource Conservation and Development.

“Using Natives in Your Garden or Landscape,” Lookout Mountain Nature Center.

“The Forgotten Pollinators,” Nabhan.

“Troublesome Weeds of the Rocky Mountain West,” Colorado Weed Management Association, 4th Edition.

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