



Conserving the Heritage of Native Plants

NRCS Plant Materials Program

The NRCS Plant Materials Program selects conservation plants and develops innovative planting technology to solve the nation's critical resource concerns. The program includes a network of 26 Plant Materials Centers (PMCs) and associated Plant Material Specialists serving all 50 states and territories. The program maintains and distributes foundation seed for the commercial production of certified seed, which is commonly used in conservation plantings on private and public lands. Over the past 70 years, the program has cooperatively selected over 500 conservation plants for use in conservation applications and release to the seed industry.

Native Plants

Traditional use of native plants is important to tribal people, especially plants for rituals and customs. Native plants were essential in the everyday life of early indigenous people and were used for food, medicine, religion, tools, manufacturing, and commercial trade. Since the 1950s, PMCs in the Northern Great Plains and Rocky Mountains have evaluated the performance of hundreds of plant species that played an important role in the historic culture of the American Indian.

Plant Materials and Tribal Assistance

The program cooperates with tribal partners to assist in the identification, propagation, and establishment of culturally significant plants. Other means of assistance is provided through the development of propagation protocols, informational brochures and planting guides, and PMC tours to transfer technology on the conservation of cultural plants. The program makes recommendations to numerous tribal groups on activities such as greenhouse construction, roadside revegetation, streambank stabilization, field and hothouse plant establishment, pasture and crop production systems, erosion control methods, and noxious weed control.

Contact Information:

More information on the Plant Materials Program can be found at:

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USDA NRCS Plant Materials Website:
<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov>

USDA NRCS Plants Database:
<http://plants.usda.gov>

Aberdeen, Idaho PMC



Fourwing Saltbush

Atriplex canescens
Large, perennial shrub
Female plants bear large, winged seeds
Uses
Decoction of roots taken for bad cough; cure for stomach disease
Soapy lather applied to relieve itch or rash and as hairwash
Pulverized roots applied to relieve toothaches
Yellow dye
Seeds supplemented diet
Ground seeds as leavening to make bread
Releases
1976 'Wytana' cultivated variety, Montana PMC
2001 Snake River Plains Germplasm, Idaho PMC



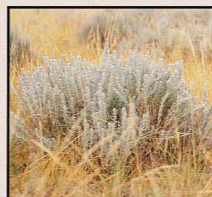
Lewis Flax

Linum lewisii
Wildflower with narrow leaves and drooping, blue flowers
First collected by Captain Meriwether Lewis near the Continental Divide in Montana
Uses
Tea of flax seed mixed with licorice root treated cough and inflammation
Poultice of ground seed treated pain, boils, and ulcers
Stem fibers woven into baskets, mats, snowshoes, and fish nets
Release
2004 Maple Grove Germplasm, Idaho PMC



Hardstem Bulrush

Scirpus acutus
Grass-like, perennial wetland plant
Uses
Seed, pollen, and roots to supplement diet
Stems made into mats and baskets
Releases
1997 Camas, Hagerman, Ogden Bay and Stillwater Germplasms, Idaho PMC



Winterfat

Krascheninnikovia lanata
Erect shrub up to 3 feet tall with tightly rolled, downy white leaves
Uses
Decoction from leaves treated fevers, small pox, sore muscles, open sores, and boils
Leaves were soaked to make hairwash
Powdered root on burns and poison ivy rash
Releases
1985 'Hatch' cultivated variety, Colorado and New Mexico PMCs
2001 Northern Cold Desert Germplasm, Idaho PMC
2002 Open Range Germplasm, Montana PMC



Indian Ricegrass seed

Winterfat seed



"Indian turnip"
Pediemelum esculentum
Photo: State Historical Society of North Dakota 1955 0102

Bismarck, North Dakota PMC



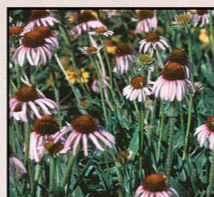
Chokecherry

Prunus virginiana
Large shrub producing reddish-purple berries
Uses
Fresh berries supplemented diet
Berries dried for winter use in soups
Release
Plans for future release, North Dakota PMC



Silver Buffaloberry

Shepherdia argentea
Large shrub producing red berries
Uses
Fresh and dried berries supplemented diet
Releases
1984 'Sakakawea' in honor of the woman who guided Lewis and Clark, North Dakota PMC



Purple Coneflower

black sampson, *Echinacea*
Echinacea angustifolia
Long-lived wildflower
Uses
Relieved toothaches; sore throat, and stomachache
Poultices reduced swellings, applied to burns and snakebites
Smoke treatments cured headaches in people and distemper in horses
Releases
2000 Bismarck Germplasm, North Dakota PMC



White Sage

Artemisia ludoviciana
Low, spreading shrub
Uses
Burnt leaves cured "bad medicine" and treated horses
Tea of boiled plant treated bronchitis
Releases
Plans for future release, North Dakota PMC

Bridger, Montana PMC



Indian Ricegrass

Achnatherum hymenoides
Perennial grass of dry, sandy soils
Uses
Raw seeds eaten to relieve stomachache, colic, and aching bones
Cooked seeds eaten as dumplings
Seeds added to soups
Seeds ground into flour and meal for cakes, pones, and flat bread
Releases
1974 'Paloma' cultivated variety, New Mexico PMC
1978 'Nezpar' cultivated variety, Idaho PMC
1996 'Rimrock' cultivated variety, Montana PMC



Sweetgrass

Hierochloa odorata
Perennial, spreading grass of wet areas
Uses
Ceremonial incense, strengthen link to spiritual world
Increase benevolent powers
Ward off evil spirits
Included in medicine bundle
Post-childbirth cleanser and healer
Hairwash
Releases
1998 'Radora' cultivated variety, South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station
2004 Spirit Germplasm, Montana PMC



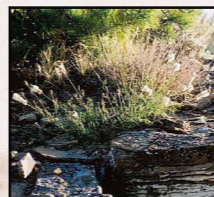
Prairie Coneflower

Ratibida columnifera
Perennial wildflower
Uses
Treated snakebites and poison ivy rash
Treated stomachache, headache, and chest pain
Tea as beverage and to reduce fever
Yellow dye
Release
2004 Stillwater Germplasm, Montana PMC



Western Yarrow

Achillea millefolium var. occidentalis
Long-lived, spreading wildflower
Uses
Dressing for wounds and skin rash
Remedy for colds and fever
Eye wash
Treatment for bleeding disorders of menstruation and childbirth
Release
2004 Great Northern Germplasm, Montana PMC



White Prairie Clover

Dalea candida
Long-lived legume
Uses
Tea to prevent diseases
Roots chewed as tasty gum
Roots eaten as diet supplement
Release
2000 Antelope Germplasm, Montana PMC

Manhattan, Kansas PMC



Maximilian Sunflower

Helianthus maximiliani
Tall, spreading wildflower
Uses
Food, oil, dye, thread
Releases
1978 'Prairie Gold' cultivated variety, Kansas PMC
2000 Medicine Creek Germplasm, North Dakota PMC



Purple Prairie Clover

Dalea purpurea
Long-lived legume
Uses
Tea
Preventative for heart problems, diarrhea
Measles, stomachaches
Wound cleanser and dressing
Releases
1975 'Kaneb' cultivated variety, Kansas PMC
2000 Bismarck Germplasm, North Dakota PMC



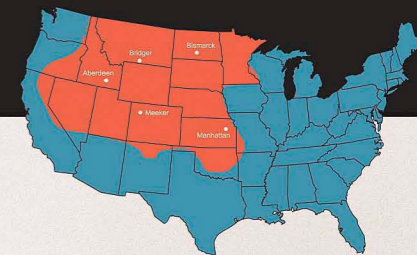
Partridge Pea

sleepingplant
Chamaecrista fasciculata
Annual legume
Uses
Infusion for fainting spells
Decoction for nausea
Release
1999 Riley Germplasm, Kansas PMC



Prairie Blazing Star

Liatris pycnostachya
Tall, long-lived wildflower
Uses
Roots treated snakebite, sore throats, and kidney ailments
Releases
1975 'Eureka' cultivated variety, Kansas PMC
1999 and 2000 Northern, Central, and Southern Iowa, and Northern and Western Germplasms, Missouri PMC



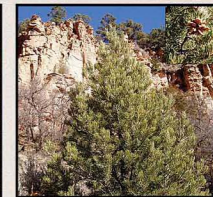
Shown on the map are the locations of the Plant Materials Centers and the geographic distribution of the native plants featured.

Meeker, Colorado UCEPC



Big Sagebrush

Artemisia tridentata
Long-lived shrub with blue-gray, 3-lobed, wedge-shaped leaves
Uses
Bark used for woven textiles, padding, insulation, and slow-matches (fire starter)
Leaves and seed infusions combated colds, sinus ailments, and digestive problems
Yellow dye
Release
1987 'Hobble Creek' cultivated variety, Colorado UCEPC



Pinyon Pine

Pinus edulis
Evergreen, coniferous tree
Uses
Seeds very nutritious and eaten raw or roasted
Pitch typically treated cuts
Pitch and needles burned as medicinal fumes to alleviate headaches, coughs, and fevers
Pitch as adhesive and sealer on baskets, pottery, clothing, and tools
Release
No commercial release, but nursery stock available from Colorado UCEPC



Mountain Mahogany

Cercocarpus montanus
Evergreen shrub with long, feathery, persistent flowering parts
Uses
Fresh berries "Indian apples" supplemented diet
Root bark produced reddish, pigment dye
Release
1978 'Montane' cultivated variety, New Mexico PMC with foundation material maintained and provided by Colorado UCEPC



Saskatoon Serviceberry

Amelanchier alnifolia
Large shrub with showy, white blossoms producing bluish-purple berries
Uses
Fresh berries "Indian apples" supplemented diet
Wood constructed into bows, arrow shafts and points, digging sticks, and hoes
Releases
(source-identified seed classes nearing release)
Clark and Long's Ridge Germplasms, Colorado UCEPC