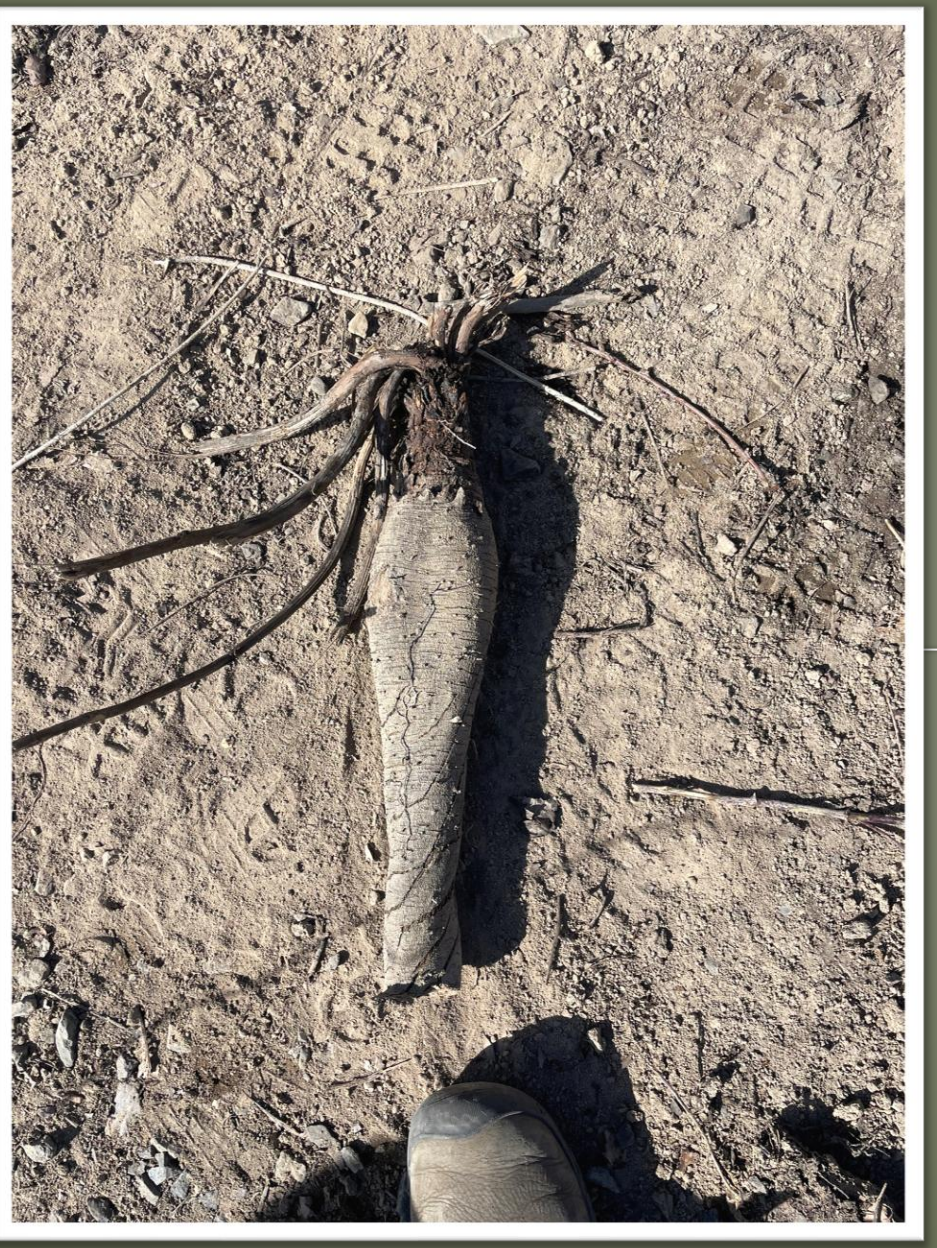
Creating a Calendar for Native Plant Gardening in NCW

Mel Asher, M.S.
Derby Canyon Natives, Inc
Peshastin, Washington



What are Native Plants?

- A plant that is a part of the balance of nature that has developed over thousands of years in a particular region…

Why Should We Plant Natives in Our Landscapes?

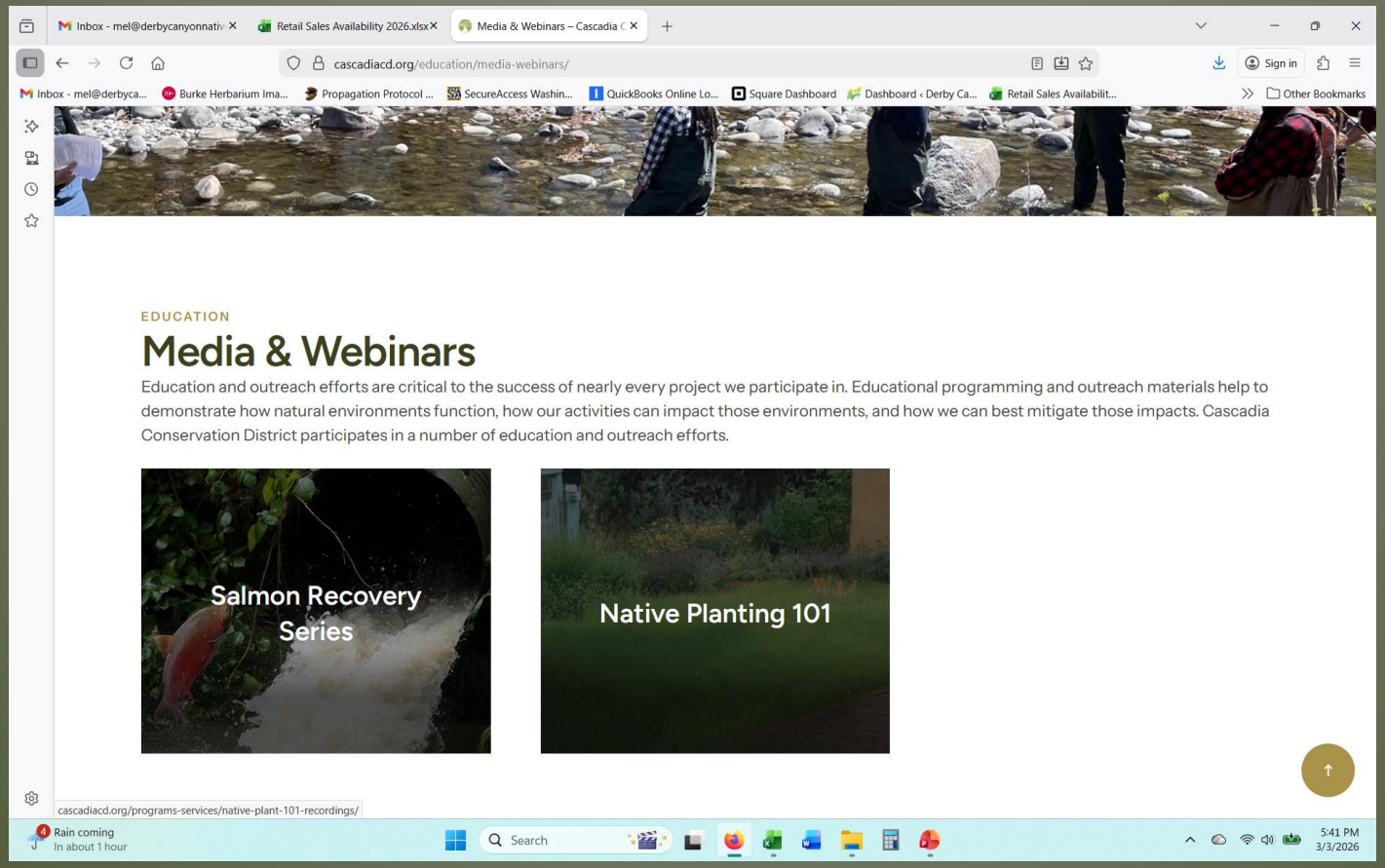
- Correctly sited native plants are adapted to our climate, which can lead to less watering
- When gardeners use native plants, they can have beautiful landscapes -- and play a vital role in protecting biodiversity.
- Why are native plants important for biodiverity?

Why Should We Plant Natives in Our Landscapes?

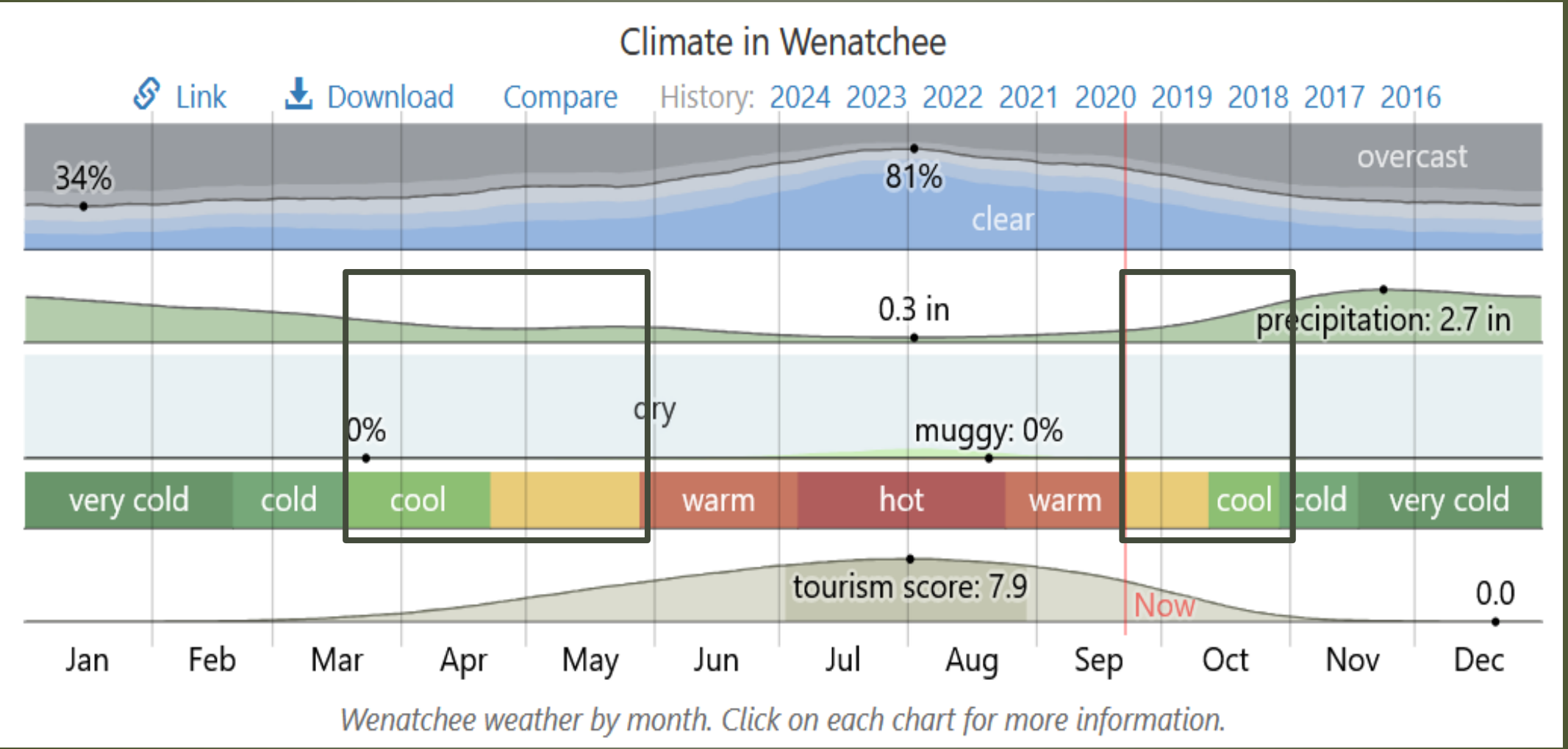
- Why are native plants important for biodiversity?
  - The Cornell Ornithology Lab estimates a decline of 3B birds in North America since 1970 (Rosenburg et al. 2019), and these declines are concentrated amongst terrestrial insectivores.
  - Non-native plants support on average 72% fewer insect species than do natives plants (Tallamy and Shropshire 2009), due to plant evolution to reduce herbivory (Rosenthal and Berenbaum 2012), and 90% of insects are specialists
    - Cardiac glycosides and milky latex in Milkweeds

Native Plant Gardening Calendar - Introduction

- Cascadia CD will provide a PDF of today's presentation, and a recording will be posted on YouTube.

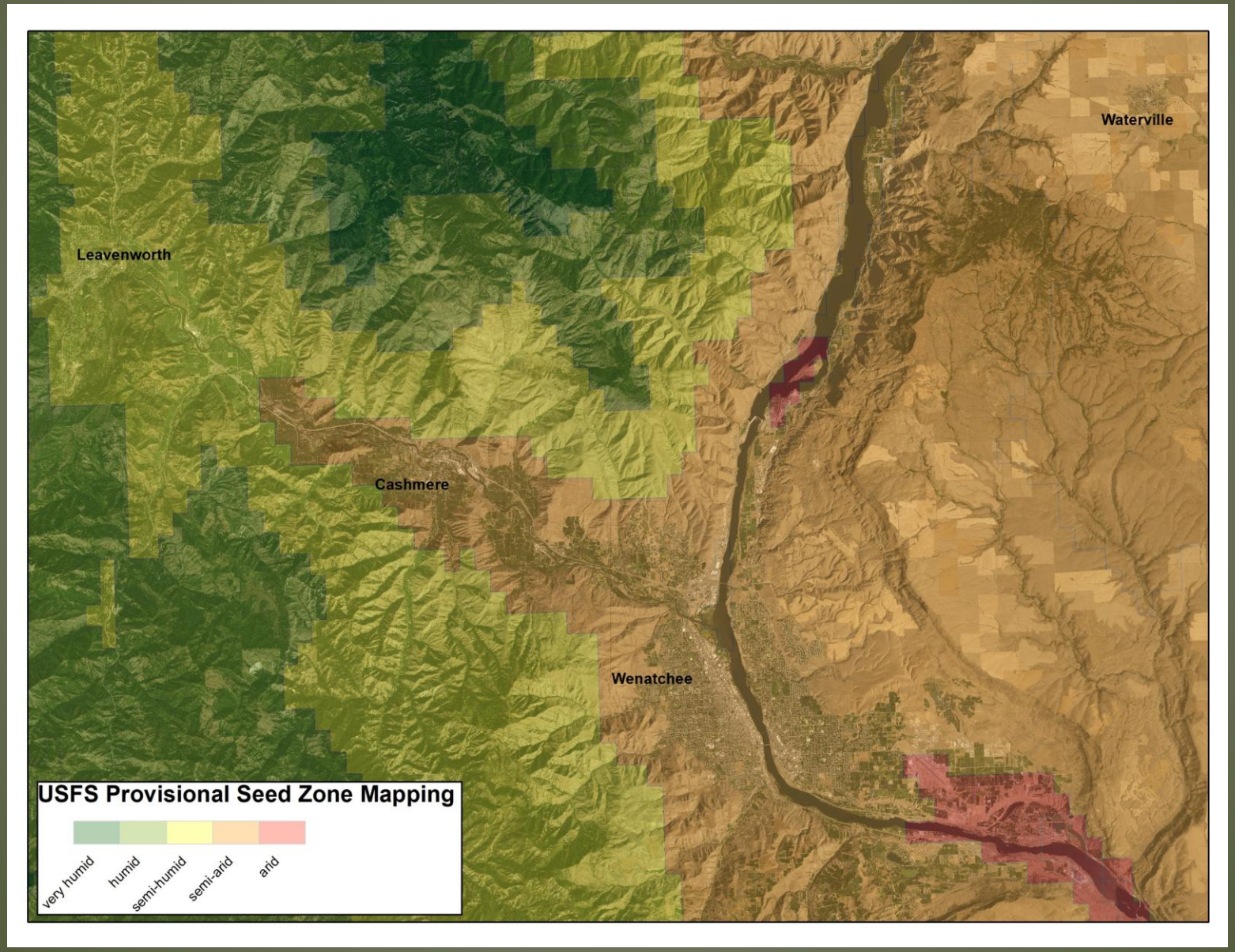


Local Climate



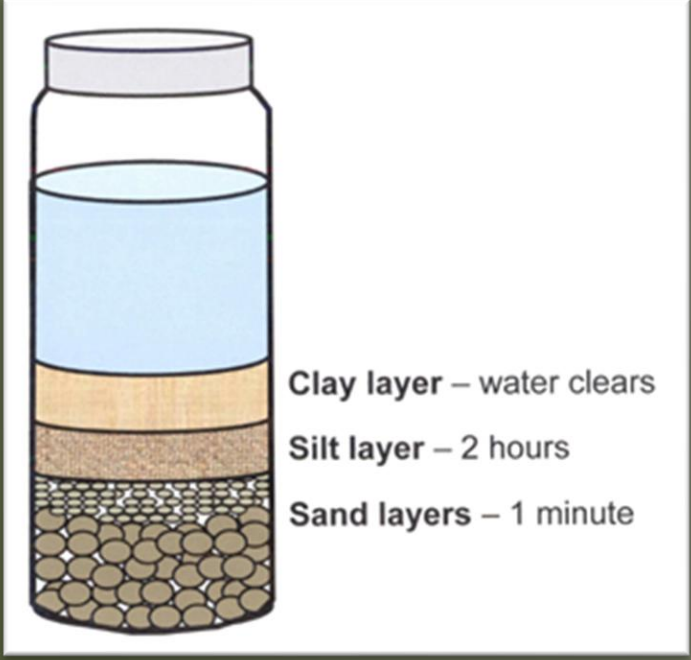
Source: Weatherspark.com

Different Climate Zones in Our Region



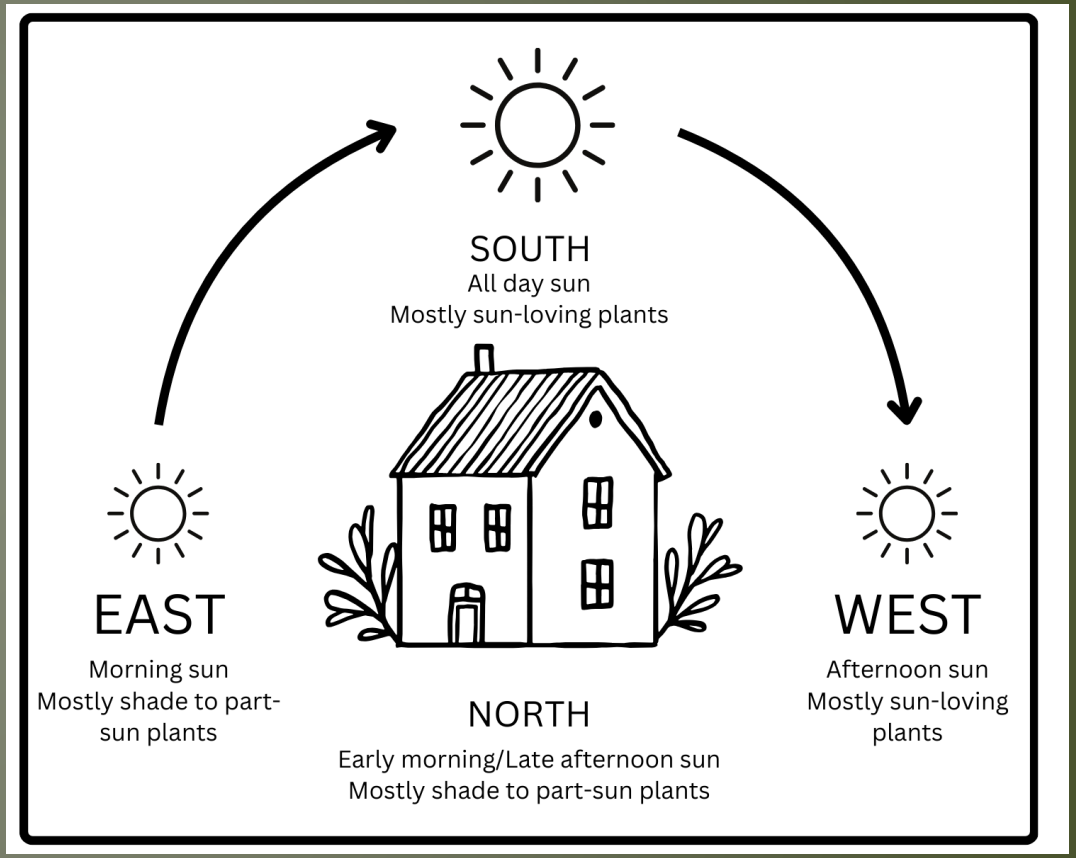
January / February

- Researching and Planning
  - Testing soil
    - Texture and compaction are critical – FERTILITY IS NOT!
      - Texture – ribbon or jar test; Compaction – shovel test



January / February

- Researching and Planning
  - Testing soil
    - Texture and compaction are critical – FERTILITY IS NOT!
  - Thinking about exposure and irrigation that is already installed.



January / February

- Researching and Planning
  - Testing soil
    - Texture and compaction are critical – FERTILITY IS NOT!
  - Thinking about sun exposure and existing irrigation.
  - Recommended publications/sites

Sources for Information on Inland NW Native Landscaping

https://derbycanyonnatives.com/plants/wildflowers/

by Ca... mail.google Dashboard · My AcuRite TRM Seed Zone M

Names	Height	Flower Color	Bloom Time	Exposure	D T
Achillea millefolium yarrow	12-24"	white	May-August	S, PS	X
Agastache rupestris sunset hyssop	18-30""	pink/orange	late June-Sep	S	X
Allium cernuum nodding onion	15-20"	pink (white)	May-June	S	X
Anaphalis margaritacea pearly everlasting	18-24"	white	June-Aug	S	X
Antennaria microphylla rosy pussytoes	6-12"	pink to rose	May-June	S	X
Apocynum androsaemifolium spreading dogbane	6-16"	pink	May-July	S, PSH	X
Aquilegia formosa red columbine	24-30"	red/yellow	May-July	PSH	
Aruncus dioicus goatsbeard	36-60"	white	May-June	SH, PSH	

Landscaping with Native Plants of the Intermountain Region

Technical Reference 1730-3
December 2003

US Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Pahove Chapter
Idaho Native
Plant Society

Larry G. Selland
College of Applied Technology
Center for Horticulture Technology

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

Native Plants of Eastern Washington

The Natural Way to Grow

Washington Native Plant Society
Columbia Basin Chapter

Gardening with native plants is good for the soul and is good for the earth.

What are Native plants?

Native plants are those that were present in a particular region before the arrival of European Americans. The native plants found in eastern Washington evolved with local microorganisms, insects, and wildlife and are adapted to the local climate and soils.

Why Use Native Plants?

Hundreds of plant species are native to eastern Washington and many are interesting and beautiful enough to be used in garden settings. Using natives can benefit not only your yard or landscape, but can also help maintain the diversity of the local flora and fauna. Although large natural areas are better at supporting diversity, numerous small areas help too. Below are some of the advantages of using native plants:

Native plants:

- ♠ are adapted to our climate of wet winters and hot, dry summers
- ♠ require less water and generally less maintenance than non-natives once they are established
- ♠ improve water quality by needing less fertilizer and no pesticides
- ♠ provide shelter, food and pollination opportunities for native wildlife
- ♠ resist native pests and diseases better than non-natives, and may provide habitat for native beneficial insects
- ♠ save resources and encourage a sense of stewardship

Landscaping with Native Plants

Before you start designing your garden, you might want to take a walk through the desert in the spring. An easy and fun way to learn what the plants look like and get some design ideas is to go on a Native

January / February

- Researching and Planning
  - Testing soil
    - Texture and compaction are critical – FERTILITY IS NOT!
  - Thinking about sun exposure and existing irrigation.
  - Recommended publications/sites
  - Sourcing

Where to Purchase

Washington Native Plant Society
https://www.wnps.org/native-gardening/sourcing

WASHINGTON NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY NATIVE PLANT & SEED SOURCES 2024

This information is provided as a resource by the Washington Native Plant Society and does not imply an endorsement. For more information, suggested additions, or data changes, please contact WNPS at 206-527-3210 or info@wnps.org. The contacts listed here are updated several times a year.

Specialty Nurseries Some of these growers, nurseries and seed suppliers deal mainly in native plants. Others stock mostly non-natives yet may also have a good selection of natives. Many specialize in plants for wetlands, alpine and rock gardens, or trees and shrubs. Some will harvest seed or grow plants under contract. Confirm before visiting. Many nurseries require an appointment and may not keep regular business hours.

Use Local Native Plants Definitions of native vary from one grower to the next and may include cultivated varieties of native species, as well as plants from hundreds of miles away. For restoration and native habitat projects, it is usually best to use genetically varied stock originating from the nearest available natural sites. Local nurseries do not necessarily rely on local sources, nor is it always practical. Ask where a nursery's propagation stock or plants come from before selecting plants for landscaping or restoration projects.

RETAIL NURSERIES (**=WNPS member organization)

B.C.'s Wild Heritage Plants
47330 Extrom Rd.
Sardis, BC, Canada V2R 4V1
bcwildplants@gmail.com
604-858-5141
www.bcwildheritage.com

Biodiversity Nursery**
715A Larson St
Friday Harbor, WA 88250
melisa.pinnow@gmail.com
by appointment only
see online form
www.biodiversitynursery.com

Bosky Dell Natives
23311 SW Bosky Dell Ln.
W. Lynn, OR 97068-9130
boskydellnatives@aol.com
503-638-5945
FAX 503-638-8047
www.boskydellnatives.com

Cedar Mountain Perennials
7875 East Highway 54

Clark College Native Plant Center

Classic Nursery & Landscape Co

January / February

- Researching and Planning
  - Testing soil
    - Texture and compaction are critical – FERTILITY IS NOT!
  - Thinking about sun exposure and existing irrigation.
  - Recommended publications/sites
  - Sourcing
    - Seeds – Northwestmeadowscapes.com ; westernnativeseeds.com ; bfinativeseeds.com
      - Derby Canyon Natives – Grass seed only
    - Live Plants – Derby Canyon Natives, Plants of the Wild, numerous retail nurseries in W. Washington
      - **Proposals for the 2026 habitat kit season are open from February 23rd through April 17th: https://xerces.org/pollinator-conservation/habitat-kits/washington**

January / February

- Taking a realistic look at our goals, climate and expectations
  - 80% of the US populations lives east of the 100th meridian
  - 60% of WA's population lives west of the Cascades

The view of Wenatchee and the Columbia River from up high on the Burch Mountain Road.

January / February

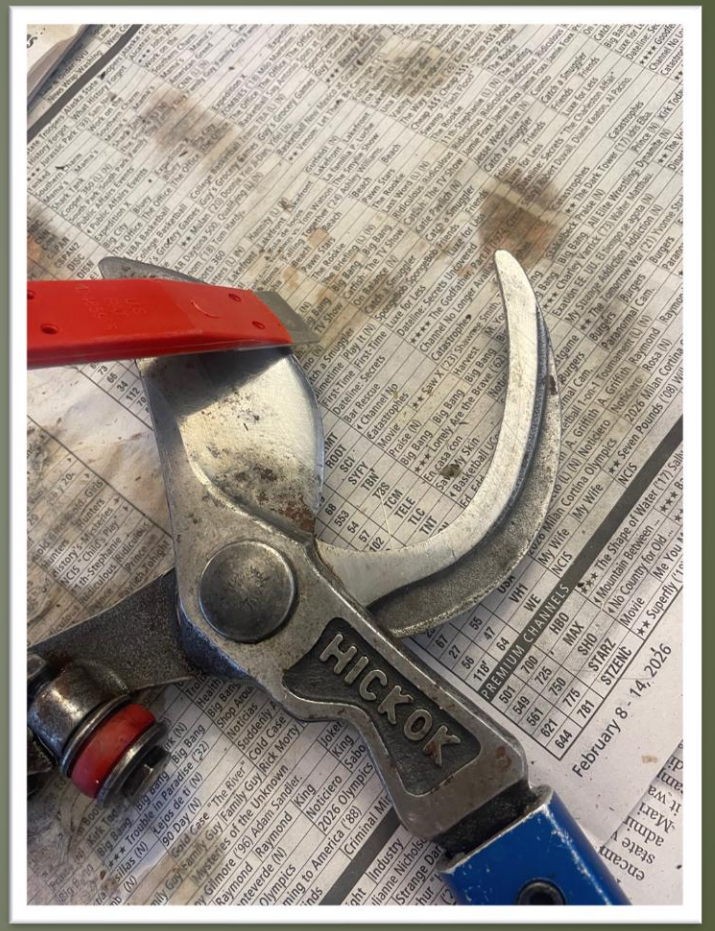
- Monitoring moisture around evergreens or even perennials that stay green

January / February

- If weather allows, sow seeds without stratification requirements

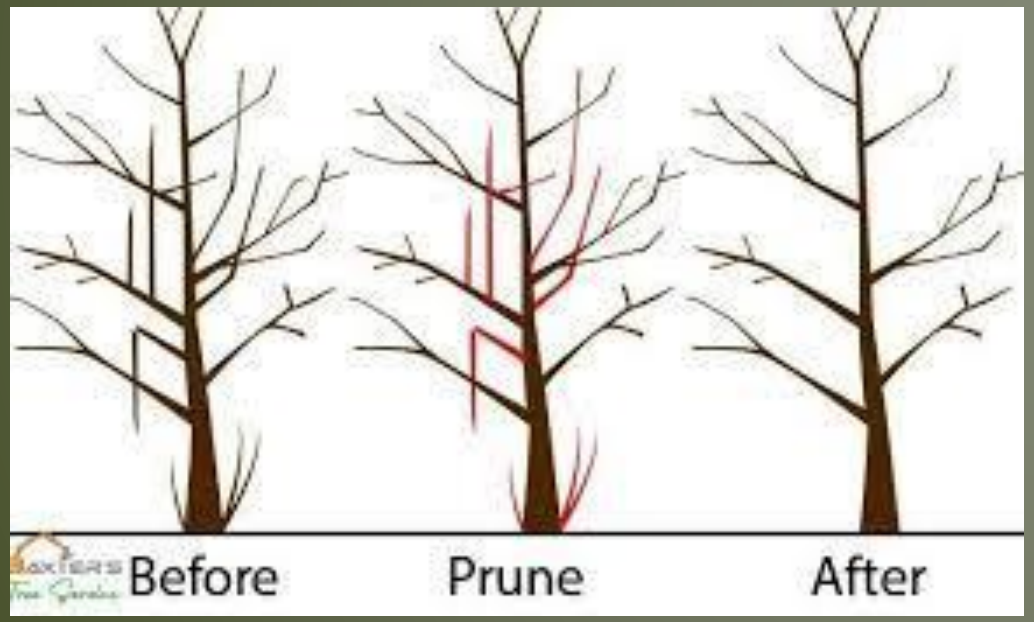
January / February

- Pruner/Tool Maintenance



January / February

- Pruner/Tool Maintenance
- Pruning for structure



March/April

- Pruning for the 3Ds (Dead-Diseased-Damaged), as well as any unwanted sprouts or suckers, can happen at any time of the year.

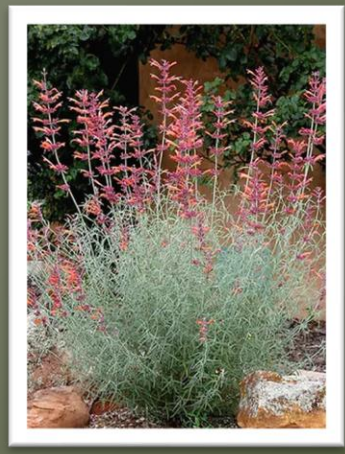
March/April

- Spring Sowing (the earlier, the better)

Spring Sown Natives - Perennials

Species	Stratification	Scarification	Seedling Growth Rate	Comment	Rating	Sow
Lupines	none	variable; hot water	fast		Moderate	Fall or Spring
Most bunchgrasses	none	none	fast		Easy	Fall or Spring
Yarrow	none	none	fast	go light with seeds	Easy	Fall or Spring
Lewis' Flax	none	none	moderate	"blue" flax is used from both native and European species	Easy	Fall or Spring
Blanketflower, milkweed, and hyssops	none	none	moderate		Easy	Fall or Spring




https://npn.rngr.net/propagation/protocols

Spring Sown Natives - Annuals

Species	Stratification	Scarification	Seedling Growth Rate	Comment	Rating
Clarkias	none	none	fast		Easy
Native annual sunflower	none	none	fast		Easy
California poppy	none	none	fast	native from the Col gorge south	Easy
Globe gilia	none	none	fast	west WA native	Easy
Plain tickseed (Coreopsis)	none	None	Very fast		Easy

https://npn.rngr.net/propagation/protocols

Clarkia aka Farewell to Spring

Annual Sunflower

Plains Tickseed

March/April

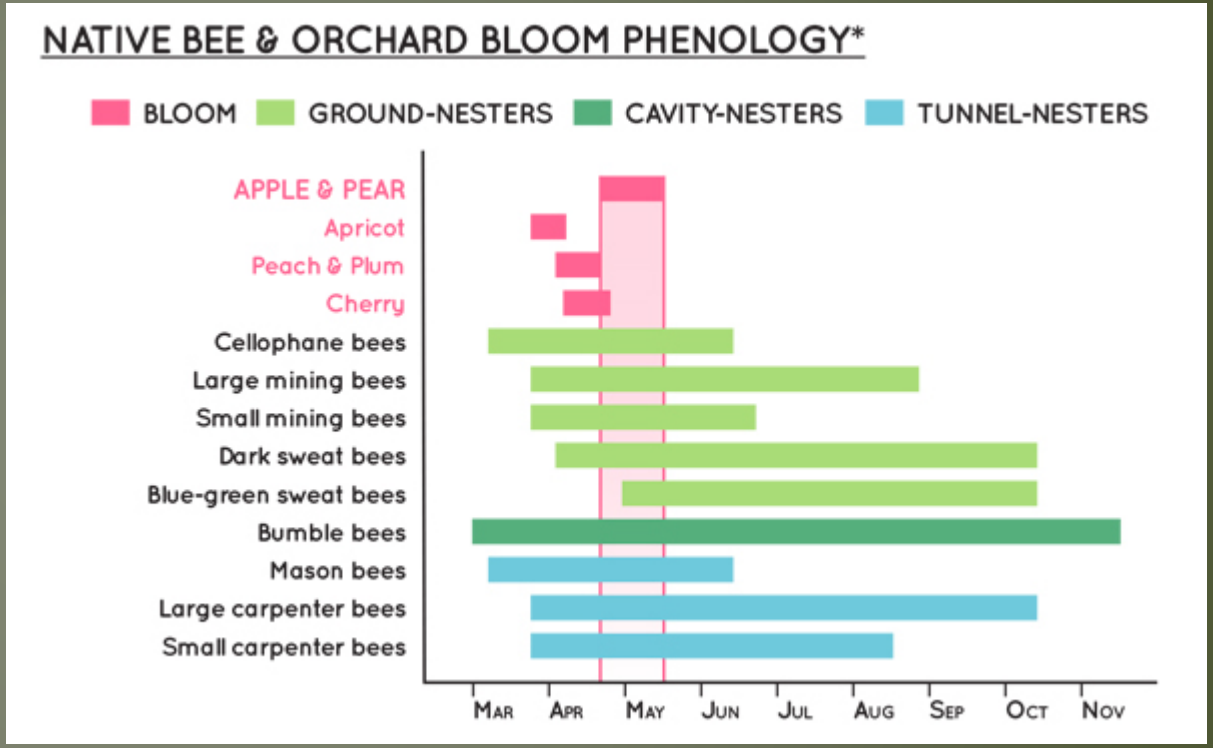
- Begin site preparation for fall sowing. This begins in the spring with the following goals:
  - Remove existing vegetation (seed production of weeds must be stopped)
  - Reduce weed seed in the seed bank
  - Prepare a good surface for seeding

March/April

- Planting Low-Elevation, Drought Tolerant Species should really occur in this window
  - Monitor new plants every 4-5 days and only water if needed
- For established plants, if fully drought tolerant, water if needed to make up for poor weather.

March/April

- Spring clean-up
  - Put this off as late as you can
  - Waiting until after cherry and pear blooms have faded (Xerces, 2025).



May/June

- Irrigation systems repair
- Monitor established plants for water needs. Water-loving plants will begin to need weekly/bi-weekly watering.
- Limit transplanting low elevation, shrub-steppe plants and seeding, water-loving plants can be planted all season if water and attention are consistent

May/June

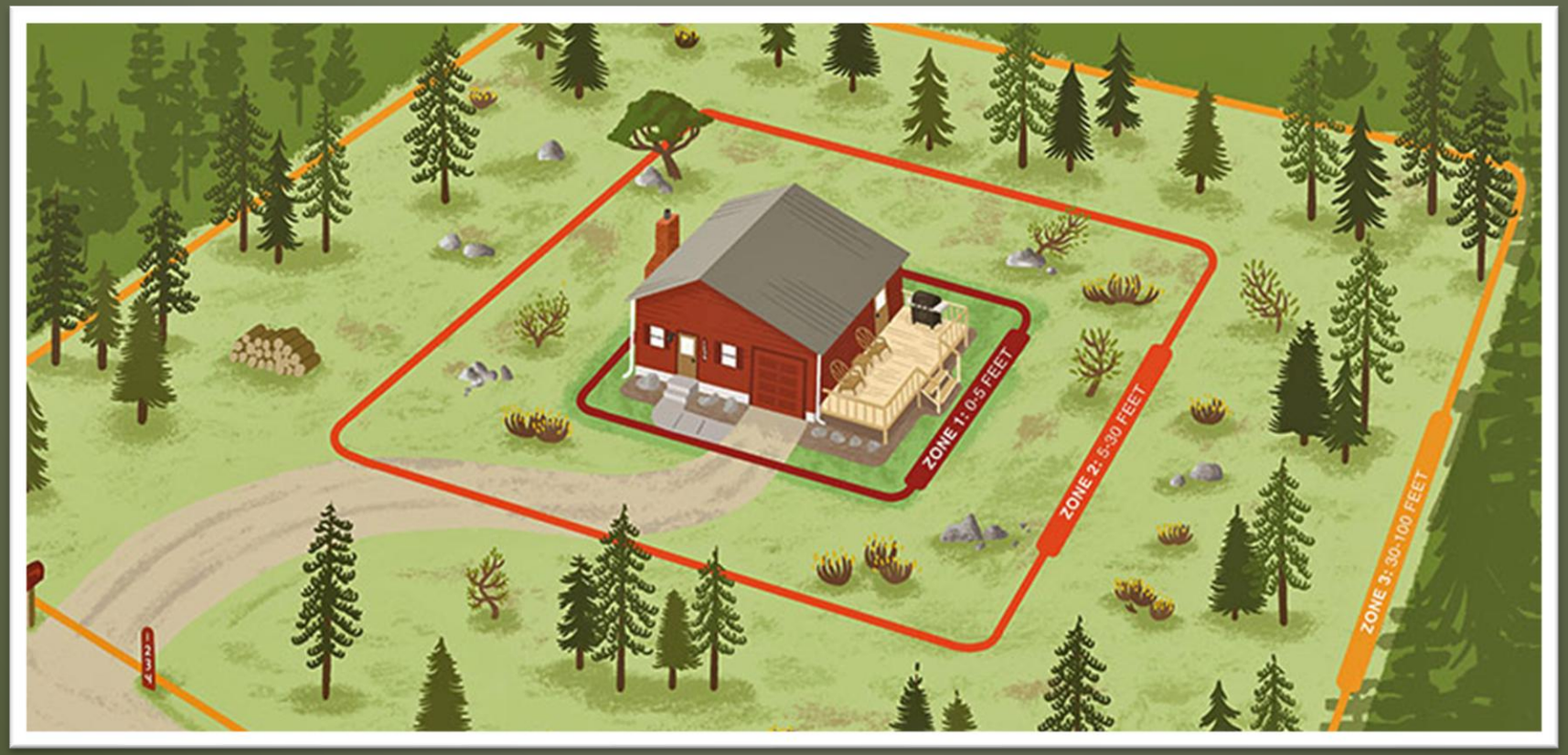
- Hiking and wildflower observations
- Seed collecting begins!
  - Balsamroot in May
  - Lupines and Desert Parsley in June

May/June

- Try to ignore aphid infestations, particularly on established plants
  - Aphid-prone species you may want to avoid include:
    - Currants
    - Cranberry
    - Red columbine
    - Spiraeas

May/June

- Consider Firewise principles as fire season approaches
  - The first 5’ around structures need to be low and/or green
  - Complete spring clean-up



July/August

- Avoid planting drought tolerant plants and sowing seeds
- Water really drought tolerant plants a few times a month at most
- WL plants will need water 1-3X a week

July/August

- Powdery mildew
  - If this bothers you, it can avoid planting species that are commonly infected
    - Bigleaf lupine
    - Snowberry
  - Treatment/prevention includes:
    - Removing lower/dying leaves
    - Water in the early morning only
    - Fungicides, Neem Oil, or home treatments

Warm Moist Stratification

Species	Stratification	Scarification	Seedling Growth Rate	Comment	Rating
Rose family shrubs	warm moist, then cool moist	none	moderate		Challenging
Kinnickinick	warm moist, then cool moist	acid	moderate		Challenging

https://npn.rngr.net/propagation/protocols

September / October

- Fall Planting Begins!

September / October

- Resist/minimize fall clean-up
  - Move leaves if needed to a pile on your property, don't shred

https://xerces.org/sites/default/files/publications/18-014_02_Natural-Nesting-Overwintering-FS_web.pdf

November / December

- Dormant seedings begin around Halloween, with the idea that seeds do not germinate until after snowmelt in the late winter
- Seed sowing can continue as long as soils are not frozen or covered in snow
- ALL Natives can be sown in the fall, but the following list contain species that must be fall/winter sown

Fall Sown Natives – Perennials

Species	Stratification	Scarification	Seedling Growth Rate	Comment	Rating	Sow
Mallows	cool, moist	hot water	slow		Challenging	Fall
Desert parsleys	cool, moist	none	slow	staggered germ over years	Moderate	Fall
Balsamroot	extended cool, moist	none	slow		Moderate	Early Fall
Penstemons	cool, moist	none	slow		Moderate	Fall
Indian ricegrass	cool, moist	Sand-paper	fast	staggered germ over years	Moderate	Fall

https://npn.rngr.net/propagation/protocols

Fall Sown Natives – Annuals

Species	Type	Stratification	Scarification	Seedling Growth Rate	Comment	Rating	Sow
Globe gilia	Annual	cool, moist	none	fast	west WA native	Easy	Fall or Spring
Bee Plants	Annual	cool, moist	none	fast		Moderate	Fall

Globe Gilia

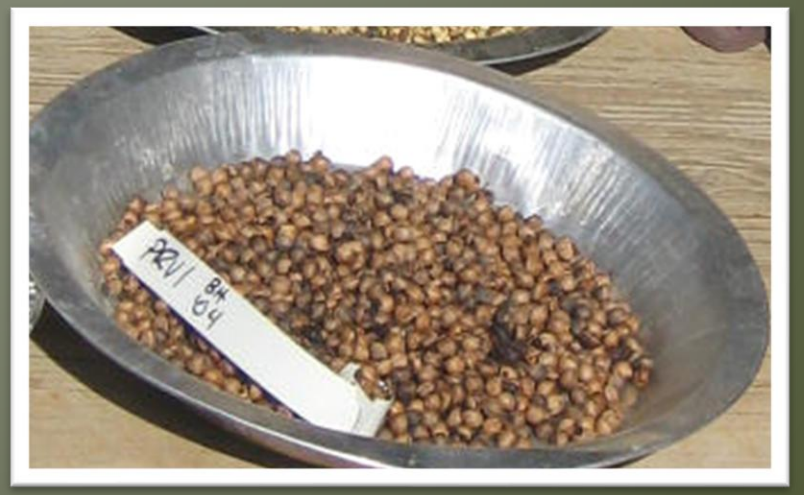
Rocky Mt Bee Plant

Fall Sown Natives – Trees and Shrubs

Species	Stratification	Scarification	Seedling Growth Rate	Comment	Rating
most trees and shrubs	yes		slow	Often needs substantial processing	Challenging
Rose family shrubs	warm moist, then cool moist	none	moderate		Challenging
Ceanothus shrubs	yes	hot water	slow		Challenging
Kinnikinnick	warm moist, then cool moist	acid	moderate		Challenging

https://npn.rngr.net/propagation/protocols

Douglas fir cones and seeds



Cleaned chokecherry seeds

Final Thoughts

- Native plant gardening in the inland NW follows a different calendar than it might in most of the country.
  - The best time to be planting and sowing seeds might be when it's a little chilly
- Habitat gardening is going to look different as well. There will be "mess", leaves, stems, "pests" etc.

Questions??

Mel Asher – mel@derbycanyonnatives.com
www.derbycanyonnatives.com

References

https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/Library_BLMTechnicalReference1730-03.

https://www.derbycanyonnatives.com

https://www.wnps.org/native-gardening/resources#habitat

https://npn.rngr.net/propagation/protocols

https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/DECLINE-OF-NORTH-AMERICAN-AVIFAUNA-SCIENCE-2019.pdf

https://xerces.org/sites/default/files/publications/18-014_02_Natural-Nesting-Overwintering-FS_web.pdf