

PMC plant materials center
Corvallis, OR

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Third Annual Farmscaping with Native Plants Field Day



(above): **Dale Darris**, Conservation Agronomist, discusses the growth characteristics of various native grass species.

The Corvallis PMC, OSU's Integrated Plant Protection Center, Farmscaping for Beneficials Program, and the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation partnered again for the 3rd Annual Farmscaping with Native Plants Field Day.

Thirty people attended the Field Day which included farmers/landowners, NRCS and SWCD conservationists, teachers, a seed company owner, and invasive plant specialist.

This year the PMC presented not only beneficial insect and native pollinator biology and conservation but also detailed conventional and organic habitat site preparation

and native plant field establishment using various farm implements.

The goal of the Field Day was to assist participants in identifying ways to incorporate native plants into their farming systems to increase habitat and biodiversity for pollinators and beneficial insects. It is hoped that with this newly acquired knowledge, participants will be able to better advise

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Employee Spotlight Corvallis PMC Welcomes New Agronomist to the Staff

Annie Young-Mathews came on board at the Oregon Plant Materials Center (ORPMC) in August as a Conservation Agronomist. Annie is a Santa Cruz, CA native who has been working as a Career Intern Agronomist for the last two years at the California Plant Materials Center in Lockeford. She has worked as an environmental educator with Peace Corps Nicaragua, participated in restoration projects, interned on organic farms, assisted with fieldwork on watershed assessments and a restoration ecology study, and studied the benefits of riparian plant and soil microbial biodiversity for ecosystem health on farms and rangelands. She received her MS in Horticulture & Agronomy from UC Davis in 2009, and her BS in Biology from University of Oregon in 2000 (go ducks!).



(above): **Annie Young-Mathews** planting.

Why Use Native Grasses in Our Area?



(above): **The Corvallis PMC's Demonstration Garden, which highlights numerous native grass species grown at the PMC.**

As we already know or find out in a hurry, compared to native grasses, exotic, tame or introduced grasses are usually much cheaper by the pound, more readily available at local stores, and sometimes more “forgiving” when it comes to ease of establishment. This seems especially true on the rainy “Westside” of Oregon and Washington where conditions are more benign and plant friendly. So why bother with enlisting our local native species when it comes to revegetation, erosion control, and other uses? Well, there may be more justifications than first come to mind.

Most often in the forefront are ecological reasons. First, when it comes to restoration of habitats with grass as a natural component,

the process by definition requires native grasses. Second, with few exceptions (e.g. California brome) native grasses are much less likely to be an agricultural or residential weed in our region. Most weedy grasses are exotic, and increasingly some introduced pasture and turf grasses have “escaped” to invade

(below): **Additional native grass species grown in the demonstration garden.**



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Farmscaping...continued from page 1
 their clients to consider pesticide impacts on beneficial insects in future pest managements decisions. This information will help adjust management (tillage, mowing, etc.) where possible, to increase on-farm beneficial insect numbers, propagate native plants, provide resources needed by native pollinators to increase pollination services, and create new habitat for beneficial insects (beetle banks, insectary plantings, flowering cover crops, bee nest boxes, etc.) on farms.

T&E Training Another Success for PMC



(above): Participants gather around rare plant species.

Well, we thought we might have everyone trained on the Threatened and Endangered plants of the Willamette Valley, but we had over 25 participants from various agencies take part in this year's 6th annual training for these rare plants! Once again the Corvallis PMC grew and provided potted plant examples of the rare plants or close-look-alikes to key and see the difference between these plants.

Native Grasses...continued from page 2
 natural areas, seriously threatening diversity and excluding desirable species. Tall fescue, tall oatgrass, and colonial bentgrass immediately come to mind. Thirdly, local sources of native grasses have evolved over thousands of years to be naturally adapted to local soils and weather patterns, including unusual site conditions such as serpentine soils.

What about potential dependence of our local fauna on native grasses where introduced grasses won't suffice? Unlike native herbaceous broadleaf and woody species, there are few examples of our native grasses as an absolute, species specific food or shelter requirement (over an introduced grass) for endemic wildlife and beneficial insects. Nevertheless, there is logic to the general argument that through co-evolution, close inter-relationships may well and probably do exist between native grasses and certain native animals. While more research is needed, it's conceivable that more cases will be found where introduced grasses are less favored or less suitable. Therefore, native grasses are simply a more conservative and safer choice when it comes to meeting the potential needs of diverse wildlife and insect species and broader ecological goals in general.

Finally, there are other pragmatic reasons to use native grasses. Many have their own aesthetic and unique appearance (form, seed heads, color) not found in exotic or introduced grasses. Properly chosen, some make excellent choices for drought resistant, low fertility, low input range, pasture, or turf management systems. While federal policy requires their use on federal lands in some situations, planting them by choice creates positive public relations and a favorable perception. In the best sense, wise use of native grasses maintains our region's biodiversity and promotes the stewardship of our natural heritage.