

MOJAVE DESERT NATIVE PLANT PROGRAM: DEVELOPING GENETICALLY AND ECOLOGICALLY APPROPRIATE NATIVE PLANT MATERIALS FOR DESERT HABITAT RESTORATION

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Large-scale wildfires, invasive species, and renewable energy development continue to degrade large acreages across the Mojave Desert Ecoregion. Because of harsh growing conditions, periodic droughts, heavy granivore pressure on restoration seedlings, and lack of commercial native seed producers, restoration is particularly challenging in the Mojave Ecoregion. The Mojave Desert Native Plant Program is taking a multi-faceted approach to implementing the National Seed Strategy within this challenging environment. This includes: 1) developing seed transfer zones through a combination of genetic analysis and common garden research, 2) developing seeding strategies to circumvent granivory, 3) use of quality nursery-grown container stock, 4) development of native species releases and species-specific growing techniques useful for commercial growers, and 6) development of restoration decision-making tools for managers. A primary emphasis of the program is habitat restoration for the Federally Threatened Mojave desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), utilizing forage and cover species important for desert tortoise habitat, while simultaneously benefitting pollinators and maintaining genetic diversity across the landscape.

Key Words: RESTORATION, NATIVE SEED, MOJAVE, DESERT SHRUBLANDS, SEED TRANSFER

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