

A photograph of a lush meadow filled with yellow buttercups and purple columbines. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, and the background is a dense field of similar flora. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent green rectangular box.

Extending the Reach

Getting Regionally Native Seed on the Landscape

Sierra Smith
Center for Natural Lands
Management

Problem: Disappearing Seed Banks

South Sound Grassland Numbers:

90+% conversion to agriculture, development, “High human-use landscapes”

3% high quality remains

Restoration focuses on remaining 7% degraded habitat



Vision:

Thriving native plant communities across the breadth of our landscapes

Public access to regionally native seed



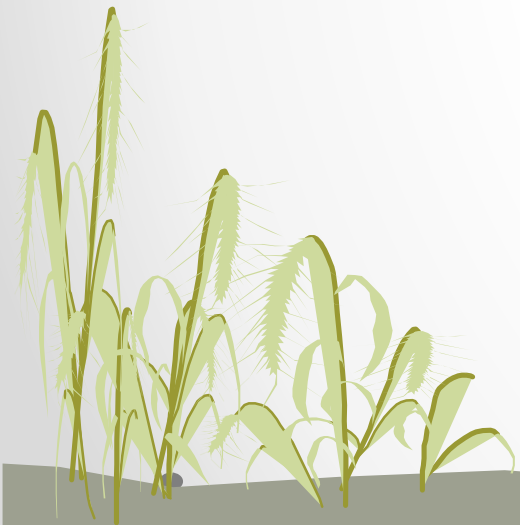
Photo credit: Kristin Cassidy, Brooklyn Bridge Park

What if?

Instead of weeds
“Wildflower” mixes
consisted of locally-sourced
native plants



Photo Credit: valleygardencenterphx.org



What if?

Pastures had significant native forbs and provided connectivity to pollinators



Photo Credit: Sarah Hamman, CNLM

What if?

Seeding for erosion control contributed to the re-establishment of native seed banks



Photo Credit: Heaviland Landscape Management

What if?

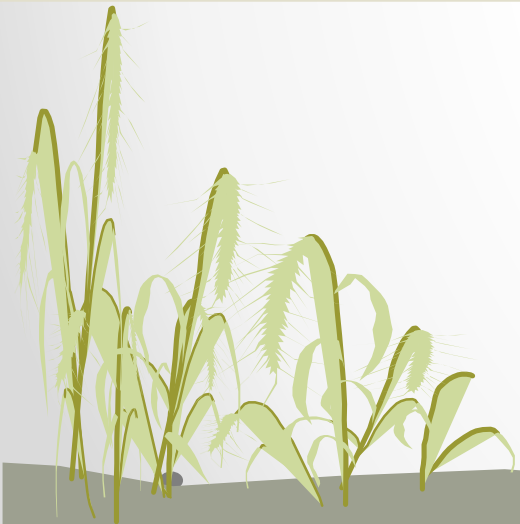
Tribes had access to the seed necessary to re-establish the local populations of traditional use plants.



Photo Credit: Patti Hart, MagoGuide



Photo Credit: Klamath-Salmon Media Collaborative



What if?

Local farmers fallowed
their fields with
regionally adapted
native species



Photo Credit: Xerces Society

What if?

Housing developments retained their namesakes after the signs were put up.

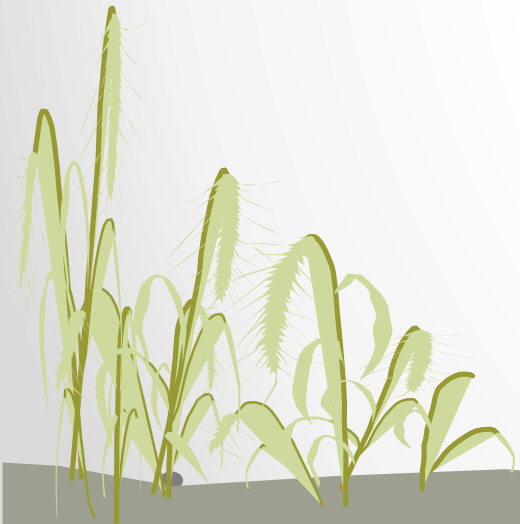


What if?

The public commons
reconnected people
with their landscape
and provided a true
sense of place.



Photo Credit: Prairie Restorations Inc.



What if?

I could reseed my property with the native plant community that once existed there?



Photo Credit: East Coast Farmer, YouTube

Challenges:

- Regionally native (RN) seed is expensive
- RN seed is not available to the public
- Public information about native plants is misleading



- Infrastructure exist within publicly funded

-



Strategies to Realize Vision

Vision:

Native seed banks on “high-human use” 90%

Goals:

- Public access to seed
- Cheaper seed
- Expand the landscapes using natives

Strategies

1. Integrate production models

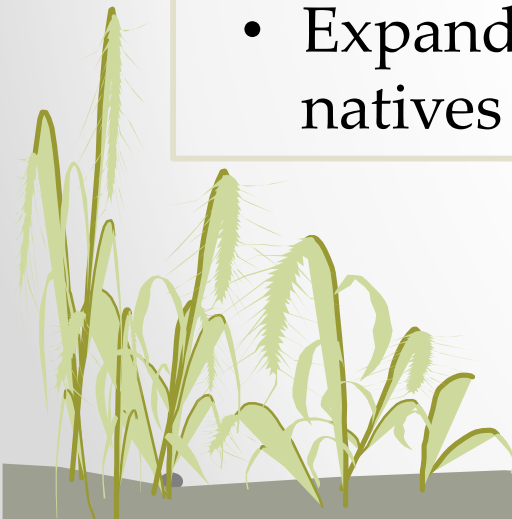
- Capitalize on strengths of each

2. Build the market

- Cultivate new partnerships
- Educate users

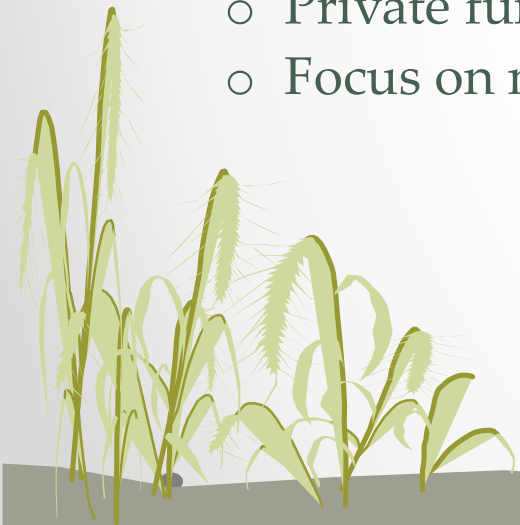
3. Develop new products

- Way out-of-the box native seed uses



Dominant RN seed models:

1. **Custom grow-outs** for big users (BLM, Forest Service, Dept. of Defense etc)
 - “Left-overs” available for sale
 - Few users drive availability; results in many “eco-types” of a narrow palette
2. **Native seed partnerships**
 - Pools regional needs
 - Grant funded with seed reserved for partners (transitioning to earned income model)
3. **Speculative production** (few growers)
 - Private funding – seed available for purchase
 - Focus on money-making species and market



Integrate Native Seed Industry

Native Seed Retailer (Local):

- Provides best diversity of RN seed to the private sector.
- Direct interface with public can spread education and understanding
- Market custom mixes and specialty products

Publicly funded partnerships (Local):

- Builds market through collaborative pooling of seed needs
- Conducts R&D to bring new species to market
- Can serve as G0 intermediary for contracts

Contract Grower (Regional):

- The bigger the grower, the cheaper the seed
- Supplies other sectors with wholesale (contracted) seed



Build Market for RN Seed

1. Establish relationships with new potential user groups
(Municipalities, weed boards, small farmers, tribes, universities, HOA's, etc.)
2. Provide value-added **or free** additional services
(Custom mixes, site visits, seeding advice, follow-up recs.)
3. Support with public funds
(NRCS incentive programs, individual grants)
4. Dispel the popular misconceptions surrounding native plants





Not Gardening with Natives

True genetic representation of local native population

Not Gardening with Natives

Education about “wildflowers”

Baby Blue Eyes, Bergamot, Blue Flax, **California Poppy**, China Aster, **Chinese Forget Me Not**, Corn Poppy, Fleabane Daisy, Globe Gilia, Indian Blanket, Lance Leafed Coreopsis, Lavender Hyssop, New England Asters, Plains Coreopsis, Purple Cone Flower, Siberian Wallflower and Sweet Alyssum



Develop New Products

- Willamette Valley Prairie Terraces (Region 3c) wildflower mix
- Southern Puget Prairies (Region 2g), spring-deferment rotational grazing mix
- Central Puget Lowland (Region 2f) erosion control mix
- Willamette Valley Foothills (Region 3d), high-mowing park mix
 - Eastern Puget Lowland (Region 2b), native winter cover crop



Prairies can't exist without People

Grasslands in this region are, and have been, peopled

If prairie and prairie species are to persist we must invite the prairies into our human landscape and experience

There are practical challenges but they are not insurmountable

The native seed industry can be instrumental in this shift



A Great Big Thanks



- To the **industry professionals** who continue to innovate and make this work possible
- To the **agency personnel** who have supported our regional efforts and taught me what it means to be part of this landscape
- And finally to **CNLM**, whose administration has given me the backing and freedom to turn our nursery program into an instrument for change

Sierra Smith; Center for Natural Lands Management
ssmith@cnlm.org; 360-480-6105

