

# NATIVE PLANT PRODUCTION EL PASO COUNTY

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Resource Stewardship

Mentors: **Dr. Jen Bousselot** (Asst. Professor, Horticulture and Landscape Architecture), and **Allisa Linfield** (Ph.D. Student, Horticulture; Horticulture Program Coordinator, El Paso County)

## PROJECT INTRODUCTION

There is increasing interest in growing native plants in Colorado. From large scale restoration projects to individual household landscaping, a growing number of gardeners and green industry professionals are appreciating the aesthetic and ecological value that native plants provide over introduced ornamental selections.

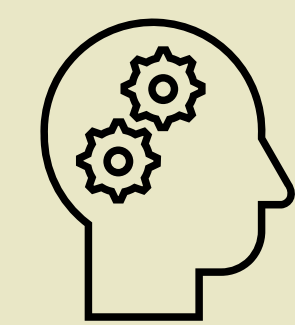
The research team's mission is to develop finishing protocols for containerized nursery production of native plants in order to increase their usage and success, and to help cultivate a growing community of native plant gardeners and advocates in El Paso County.



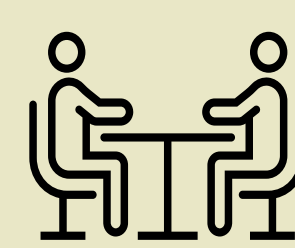
## INTERNSHIP GOALS



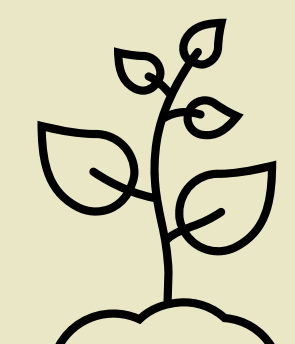
Gain hands-on experience with horticulture research, and help the team conduct multiple ongoing experiments



Expand knowledge of native plant identification and general botany, and help instruct local plant identification courses



Gain experience and professional connections by meeting local experts in the field



Help cultivate the local native plant community by participating with local organizations and key events



## WHAT YOU DID

- Helped Dr. Jen Bousselot and researcher Allisa Linfield conduct native plant research experiments by potting research plants, and tending the research plot on a daily basis
- Collected data on plant size at periodic increments throughout the summer, including manual measurements of plant height and width, and leaf chlorophyll content
- Began the process of becoming a Colorado Native Plant Master, and helped instruct multiple native plant identification courses/events
- Participated and volunteered for local events, including a Colorado Springs Utilities Native Grasses workshop, and a CSU Extension Master Gardener plant swap
- Met dozens of local experts in the field, including one on one meetings with leaders like Derek Lowstuter (CSU Extension), Gillian Rossi (City of Manitou Springs), Dr. Shane Heschel (Colorado College), Mark Platten, (CSU Extension), and Samantha Bailey (City of Colorado Springs)

## WHAT YOU LEARNED

- Initial results show that when growing native plants in-ground and in containers, substrate type can impact growth, and that substrates using peat alternatives may allow for more sustainable growing practices without compromising visual appeal
- There is opportunity to explore a more diverse array of Colorado native plant species for introduction in the green industry
- Public awareness of the ecosystem services that native plants can provide is increasing, and interest and enthusiasm for growing native plants is budding on the Front Range
- The landscape of Front Range professionals in the horticulture, ecology, and natural resources fields is incredibly diverse, and a wide array of opportunities exist

## NEXT STEPS

- This summer's data will be finalized this fall, and over the following years experimentation will continue and final results will be published
- The project aims to educate green industry professionals and home gardeners on best management practices of growing and landscaping with native plants
- After meeting dozens of local professionals across the natural resources, green infrastructure and conservation industries fields, I'm developing new ideas on professional opportunities and areas to pursue my next work experience

## HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO YOUR EDUCATION

As a CSU masters student pursuing a second career in natural resources, this internship has provided hands-on experience to couple with my ongoing coursework, and introduced me to a valuable network of local experts in various related fields.