

NATIVE PLANT PRODUCTION EL PASO COUNTY

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Resource Stewardship

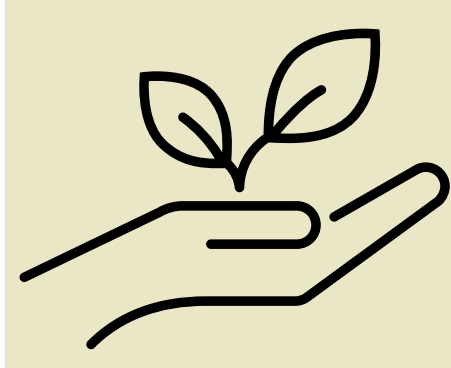
Mentors: **Dr. Jen Boussetot** (Asst. Professor, Horticulture and Landscape Architecture), and **Allisa Linfield** (Ph.D. Student, Horticulture; Horticulture Program Coordinator, El Paso County)

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

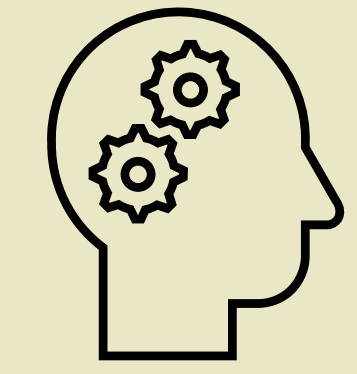
There is increasing interest in growing native plants in Colorado. From large scale restoration projects to individual household landscaping, a growing number of gardeners and green industry professionals are appreciating the aesthetic and ecological value that native plants provide over introduced ornamental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

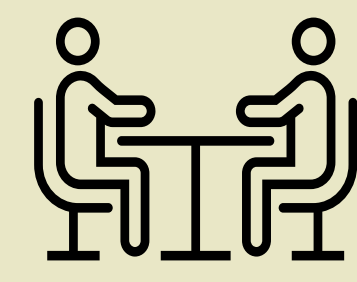
INTERNSHIP GOALS



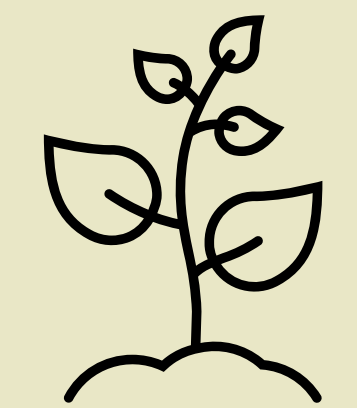
Gain hands-on experience with horticulture research, and help the team conduct multiple ongoing experiments



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

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO YOUR EDUCATION

I'm a CSU masters student pursuing a second career in natural resources, and two summers with this project team has provided hands-on experience to couple with my ongoing coursework. It has also introduced me to a valuable network of local experts in various related fields.



WHAT YOU LEARNED

- Initial results have shown 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.
- The challenges of growing native plants in this summer's difficult conditions (compared to last summer) underscores the complexity of local ecosystems and conducting outdoor plant research.
- 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.

NEXT STEPS

- Work will continue into this fall to complete measurements of this year's grow cycle, and the data will be finalized. More research will continue next summer, and final results will be published when complete.
- 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.

WHAT YOU DID

- For a second summer, I helped Dr. Jen Boussetot and researcher Allisa Linfield conduct native plant research experiments by potting research plants, and tending the research plot on a daily basis.
- I helped supervise the growing seedlings, the transport of materials, and the planting of 640 research plants at two different site locations.
- I collected data on plant size at periodic increments throughout the summer, including manual measurements of plant height and width, and root mass (after plant harvest).
- I continued work with Colorado Native Plant Master program, and helped instruct native plant identification courses.
- I attended local events, including the Front Range annual meeting of CSU Extension.