



Weedy or wonderful for your landscape?

Residents learn the difference



Extension



Can a CSU Extension program change lives? If you are a Native Plant Master™, it certainly can. One Native Plant Master participant stated that “the NPM class . . . enhanced my understanding of individual plant roles in the ecosystem. I am now able to share this information with thousands of people that attend our programs or visit our nature centers.”

17,635 citizens were educated about native plants as a result of the Native Plant Master program in 2008.

The Native Plant Master program has had far-reaching impacts. Shown below is a sample of comments gleaned from a 2008 survey when participants were asked how they used the information they learned in NPM courses:

- “I believe that my efforts have had a lasting impact on plant choices made by this organization (Habitat for Humanity of Denver).”
- “The knowledge has been extremely useful in my contact with the community in leading tours along the Poudre River, Cathy Fromme Prairie and Coyote Ridge Natural Areas. People are very interested in controlling and understanding the alien plants in the area.”
- “In my private landscape design/build business, I have incorporated more native plants and communicated to my clients their unique benefits.”
- “I am regularly on the agenda of our mountain town meeting as ‘the weed committee’ to report on weed topics.”
- “I developed a series of plant courses for the Colorado Mountain Club and have taught more than 360 volunteers about native and nonnative plants.”
- “I have felt a lot more confident in conducting classes for middle school kids on invasive weeds impact and control methods. I have also used the knowledge gained as I participate as a volunteer on the Aurora Open Space Board.”
- “In 2009, we plan to integrate the information learned through the NPM course into our training programs.” [Forest Conservancy in partnership with the White River National Forest.]

The Native Plant Master Program has made a difference.

Seventy-four percent of NPM participants reported beginning or increasing weed control efforts. Eighty percent educated others about the impact of weeds on native plants.

As a result of the program, over 1.1 million acres of land have been the target of weed control efforts.

Seventy-six percent began planting or increased planting of native plants on more than 150,000 acres.

Eighty-four percent educated others about the value of native plants for landscaping. Evaluations show 99 percent of participants reporting increased skill in identifying Colorado plants as a result of their participation in the Native Plant Master program.

A wide range of public agencies partnered with the Native Plant Master program including 98 federal, state and local governments and non-profit organizations.

Demand is strong for the program which grew from 5 NPM and supplemental courses in 2006 to 61 in 2008. One county program had a waiting list of nearly 50 percent of the total enrollment.

A total of \$27,745 was generated in user fees to support the program.

Research shows that landscapes including site-appropriate natives and adapted non-natives can reduce water usage by 60 percent.

So what's the issue? Current residents aren't always sure what plants are best for home or commercial landscapes. Many are interested in native plants that are naturally adapted to Colorado's environment. New residents find that the landscape experiences they bring

from elsewhere don't always apply to Colorado's weather, altitude, soil and available water supplies. Sustainable landscapes using native plants can reduce the need for water, maintenance time and pesticide use.

Non-native noxious weeds threaten Colorado's ecosystems

which are home to the drought-resistant native plants useful for water-wise landscapes. Invasive, non-native weeds are a key concern in many Colorado communities. Each year invasive species advance by 1.7 million acres and are found on 133 million acres across the country. Research shows that land values, grazing capacities and agricultural productivity plummet when noxious weeds invade large portions of a parcel.

The United States spends \$137 billion per year to control weeds and mitigate damage from noxious weeds.

CSU Extension created the ***Colorado Native Plant Master Program*** to address these timely issues.

The mission of the program is to teach the public about native plants in order to foster stewardship, sustainable landscapes and management of weeds that threaten native ecosystems.



In 2008, Native Plant Master courses and related classes were sponsored by 11 CSU Extension programs across Colorado.* ***A total of 914 individuals participated in these educational activities*** and included both those going on to volunteer and those choosing not to enter the volunteer program. Volunteers with three courses who meet a public education contact requirement become certified Native Plant Masters.

In Native Plant Master courses, participants explore the "outdoor laboratory" on trails in local open space parks and on other public lands. They have a chance to smell, touch and study living examples of plants useful for water-wise landscaping and noxious weeds that are invading natural landscapes. Hands-on training in the field is supplemented by the Colorado Plant Database, a research-based resource on more than 1,000 Colorado plants which is also used to generate a site-specific course manual. See <http://coloradoplants.jeffco.us>.

To learn more about the Native Plant Master Program, see www.conativeplantmaster.org or contact the Colorado State University Extension office in Jefferson County at (303) 271-6620.

*Boulder, Custer, Eagle, El Paso, Jefferson/Gilpin, Larimer, Logan/Morgan/Phillips, Montezuma, Pueblo, San Miguel Counties and the Tri-River Area.