

Impact



Sharing the difference CSU Extension makes in people's lives and their communities.

Citizens learning about native plants generate statewide economic impacts

Situation

Colorado is a dry state subject to periodic drought. The Native Plant Master program was created 20 years ago to respond to inquiries about sustaining built and natural landscapes while minimizing the use of water and reducing the impact of invasive non-native weeds that can thrive in dry conditions.

The Native Plant Master program has a wide range of benefits for a wide range of people. Participants include land managers, biologists, green industry personnel, business owners, volunteers, educators, homeowners and others. In their own words below, here's a small sampling of what participants say about how they used information they learned from Native Plant Master courses:

Native plant landscapes provide areas that can increase biodiversity including native birds and beneficial insects. The Native Plant Master program has played a key role in improving our appreciation and knowledge of native landscapes and the value that they bring across Colorado.

Results

The program was first offered in 1997 by Colorado State University Extension in Jefferson County and since has been adopted in an additional 11 counties. With increasing intensity of use of our public lands, these are just the kind of changes we need to protect these lands for future generations.

Since the first Native Plant Master training in 1997, the program has continued to grow. In the first year, three field courses were offered in Jefferson County. This year, the Jeffco program has expanded to offer 31 field courses and indoor classes. Jeffco participants in the program go on to educate the public. In the past six years alone, more than 55,000 individuals have been educated by program volunteers. This has resulted in county citizens saving water, money and time. Changes implemented by participants have resulted in an economic impact of more than \$280,000 due to savings from instituting water-wise native landscaping and increased land productivity from weed control. These practices were implemented on more than 227,000 acres countywide.



The Bottom Line

- \$31,528 in savings reported by participants due to reduced landscaping inputs and increased land productivity

Native Plant Master² 2016

- 1,603 participants in classes offered by the program
- 2,543 hours were contributed by 172 volunteers for a donated value of \$61,338
- 16,559 educational contacts made by volunteers
- 14,943 acres were impacted by sustainable landscaping or alien invasive weed control completed by program participants
- \$27,807 in user fees split 75% to counties/25% to State program which supports program materials
- 23,030 webhit sessions on the Colorado Plant Database

Impact

Thousands of Jeffco citizens have been educated by Native Plant Master (NPM) volunteers. The NPM team annually measures this impact through a survey asking program participants to report on sustainable landscaping and invasive weed mitigation projects they complete.

Savings from sustainable landscaping result from reduced water use, pruning and pest control due to planting native species that are naturally adapted to local conditions. Savings from weed control result from improved grazing, crop output, ornamental landscapes, wildlife and tourism. These figures indicate that CSU Extension has found a cost-effective way to increase the sustainability of Jefferson County's managed and natural landscapes while reducing invasive weeds.

Additional results from the 2016 NPM survey highlight many of the program's benefits to both participants and the people they contact through volunteer and paid work. Survey respondents reported that:

- 100% increased their native and non-native plant identification skills;
- 70% increased awareness of the use of native plants for sustainable landscaping;
- 72% increased their awareness of the impact of alien weeds and the importance of control.

The NPM program helped participants retain their current job or get a new one. This happens across vastly different fields of both paid and volunteer work as shown by these participant quotes:

I volunteer at Colorado National Monument and have used my Native plant background almost daily, Bob Whitmore, Volunteer, CSU Master Gardener Program I have used the native plant master courses to relearn plant identification skills and incorporate information about native plants and pollinators in web sites and presentations to green industry and the public, Laura Pottorff, Program Manager, Plant Industry Division, Colorado Department of Agriculture

We utilized native plant installation, weed control of non-native species in an urban rehabilitation park reconstruction plan which will be completed in phase 1 of construction in early 2017...as we repair the native plants habitat at the park, Sarah Shepherd, District Manager, Cherry Creek Vista Park and Rec District

- *I am involved with many volunteer projects and presentations for Broomfield County related to native and noxious plants, Nathan Kelbe, Open Space Coordinator, City and County of Broomfield*
- *Teaching Denver Rangers and the public plant ID with information about the species, Eric Knopinski, Senior Ranger, Denver Parks and Recreation*
- *"I use the information learned in the short course to help identify native plants from invasive/noxious plants. This helps in decision making in regard to weed control and revegetation efforts", Stuart J. Hayes, Parks Resource Tech, Colorado Parks and Wildlife*
- *I increased my plant ID skills, which I employed directly in assessing habitat characteristics in a long-term monitoring study of Preble's meadow jumping mice, Tim Shafer, Wildlife Biologist, Boulder County Parks and Open Space*
- *I encouraged the management of the nursery I work for to expand the variety of native plants we stock and discussed the benefits of planting natives with many customers, Lisa Olsen, Nursery Sales Lead, Highlands Garden Center*
- *I used the information to complete an expanded edition of my self-published book, Rocky Mountain Wildflowers Field Guide., Linda Nagy, owner, High Country Artworks*

Colorado State University Extension, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Colorado counties cooperating. Extension programs are available to all without discrimination. July, 2017.

"I had the opportunity to use native plants almost exclusively in my latest redesign for the parking lot and front area of the school."

"As a result of my Native Plant Course I was able to teach many children about native plants, and explain to my community college students why they should not pick and eat edibles. I also ran a native seed collection project in partnership with Wildland Restoration Volunteers and school service learning projects focused on invasive species removal."

"I have used the native plant master courses to relearn plant identification skills and incorporate information about native plants and pollinators in web sites and presentations to green industry and the public."

NPM County Partners

Boulder
Clear Creek/Denver/Gilpin/Jefferson
Custer
Delta/Mesa/East Montrose/Ouray
Douglas
Eagle
Larimer
Logan/Morgan/Phillips/Washington
Montezuma
Pueblo
San Miguel/West Montrose
Teller

Native Plant Master Mission

To educate the public about native plants in order to foster stewardship, sustainable landscaping and management of weeds that threaten native ecosystems.

Participants who complete three courses are awarded a Colorado Flora Certificate. Special classes are also offered that include site visits to unique habitats, such as the alpine life zone as well as indoor classes, including basic botany, landscaping with natives, and invasive weed management. Volunteer certification as a Native Plant Master is optional. To earn certification, volunteers must be accepted through an application process, pass three courses, and make 60 educational contacts using information they learn from the program.

Contact Information

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