



APCC Cape Cod Native Plant Growers' Cooperative

Green Growing Standards: Ethically Sourced Seed

Executive Statement: At the start of this program, APCC asks that all growers participating in the Growers' Cooperative to purchase their seed from the following organizations, which we know to follow native seed production protocols and which we consider to be ethically sourced seed: the Northeast Seed Collective, the Wild Seed Project.

Other seed sources will be considered provided their methodology of seed collection and production is in accordance with plant conservation protocols. Concurrently, APCC is working with the Native Plant Trust and others, with the aim to develop a regional seed collection and amplification program for the Cape.

Background/Why: Native plants are the foundation of a healthy and resilient ecosystem, and have evolved alongside insects, birds, and mammals in their regions, forming complex relationships. For the purpose of this program, natives are defined as those species that were naturally occurring in a region prior to European colonization.

However, the definition of native can be further specified through a land categorization model known as ecoregions. This ecologically minded classification of land gained significant traction in 1987 with James Omernik's creation of the map of U.S. Ecoregions for the EPA. This mapping system serves to provide a common language for land managers focused on different terrestrial and aquatic resources. This map denotes distinct regions, characterized by interconnected biotic and abiotic factors, such as geology and soil makeup, geographical location, disturbance regimes, climate patterns, vegetation cover, and wildlife presence.

Today our understanding and use of the ecoregions concept is divided into four levels, with level one ecoregions serving as a broad categorization of U.S. ecosystems, and level four ecoregions focusing on more minute differences. For the purposes of this program, we will be using the ecoregions distinguished in the third level: **Cape Cod is ecoregion 84.**

Plants grown in their native ecoregion, and the seeds collected from those plants, are called **ecotypic** and are extremely well-adapted to handle the conditions of Cape Cod, to flower and fruit at exactly the right time to support our native fauna. This program seeks to source seed from ecoregion 84 to ensure species and genetic suitability for success.

Please note that ethically sourced seed is NOT collected from wild populations. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management has written an extensive guide, the [Seeds of Success](#), to outline proper seed collection protocols to ensure seed collected is sufficiently genetically diverse, and that the collection process does not damage or diminish the wild populations of said plants. The seed sources we have identified for this program not only follow those guidelines, but are frontrunners of sustainable seed production practices.

APCC is working with partners, including the Native Plant Trust and Barnstable County, to develop a regional seed program to take a closer step to a locally ecotypic seed source and will keep our growers apprised of this project.

How this fits into the Growers' Coop Program: APCC requires that growers participating in the Native Plant Growers' Cooperative obtain their plant seed from the Northeast Seed Collective or the Wild Seed Project or others as may be approved.