

## What to plant

Native and naturalized grasses are the easiest to establish and most cost productive form of weed control available. To gain the benefits of drought tolerant natives and lower water use, choose plants that will thrive in the soil conditions at your location. The Franklin Conservation District (<http://franklincd.org/>) can help you determine what your soil type is and the best plants and grasses for your property.

## When to plant

Because of our low rainfall, the best time to plant native grasses and plants is in the fall, when the weather cools off and rains begin. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) suggests November 15 to February 1 for the Lower Columbia Basin. Keep in mind that dry years and other weather factors will mean it may be harder for the seed to germinate. Plan accordingly.

## Seedbed Preparation

The goal is to reduce competition from weeds and existing perennial plants while creating “safe sites” for the seed to drop into.

The ideal seedbed for a grass seeding is cloddy, clean to somewhat trashy, weed-free and furrowed or ridged.

Seedbeds for dormant seedings may be loose, but seedbeds for spring seedings must be firm.

DO NOT create a smooth, “pulverized dust mulch”.

For existing stands of introduced grasses that are being converted to native grasses, two full years of preparation may be required to adequately reduce the competition and to increase drill options.

Weeds should be controlled by tillage and/or using herbicides as per label instructions. Small plots can be hand pulled or hoed.

Seedbeds to convert existing vegetation shall be started in the fall with summer fallow completed the following spring and carried over through the fall.

No weeds should be allowed to make seed. You may have to implement a weed control program the first few years as your grass and native plants become established.

## Seed Placement

For small-seeded grasses such as Sherman big bluegrass – seed no deeper than 1/8 inch deep.

For large-seeded grasses such as tall wheatgrass – seed no deeper than 1/2 inch deep.

For mixtures with a variety of seed sizes – seed depth shall be set with the smallest seeds in mind.

Generally, 1/8 to 1/4 inch deep should work for most seed mixtures.

Once the grasses have been seeded, weeds can be culturally controlled the first year and a half by selective mowings at a height above the native grass seedlings (about 3 1/2 - 4"). The mowings will be most effective during spring or early summer during the second growing season as this is when the warm season native grasses will be growing aggressively and starting to go to seed.

## What to Expect

Most native grasses will germinate in two to three weeks and fully mature in two to three years. Root growth is the main activity during the first season of growing warm season native grasses. In the second year they will usually begin to outcompete the weeds. Areas that remain bare after the first year may need to be reseeded.

## Looking for a local seed source?

Connell Grain Growers

<http://connellgg.com/>

L&H Seed

<http://www.lhseeds.com/>

Western Reclamation

<http://www.westernreclamation.com/>

Try the FCCD Heritage Garden Resource list.

<http://franklincd.org/>

Resources

Franklin Conservation District

<http://franklincd.org/>

Master Gardeners

<http://ext100.wsu.edu/benton-franklin/>

# Tired of Weeds? Grow Grass Instead.

## Why Plant Grass; and other native and naturalized drought tolerant species.

Weeds are opportunistic. Many weedy species came from outside our area. They aggressively find niches and openings and scatter themselves across our landscape, becoming monocultures and taking over. They establish themselves in disturbed locations as soon as our backs are turned. It doesn't take long before we are crying for help in the face of an invasion of millions. Our best defense is to have something planted that we want, before Mother Nature decides to teach us a lesson and put something nastier in it's place. Why not plant native and natural species that requires little maintenance?



Crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*) in a circle corner.

*“Wildflowers do much more than add beauty to the landscape. They help conserve water, reduce mowing costs, provide habitat for birds, butterflies and other wildlife, protect the soil and save money on fertilizer and pesticides...”*

*Unlike many non-native plants, native plants introduced into landscape plantings are hardy, less susceptible to pests and diseases and unlikely to escape and become invasive.”*

*Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center*

**Franklin County Noxious Weed Control Board**  
**509-545-3847**

[fcwb@co.franklin.wa.us](mailto:fcwb@co.franklin.wa.us)  
<http://www.fcweedboard.com/>

**Weeds, weeds, and more weeds.**

Noxious weeds, and many of the nuisance weeds, are non-native plants introduced to our area through human actions. Because of their aggressive growth and lack of natural enemies, these species can be highly destructive, competitive or difficult to control. They replace native plant species with ugly infestations and monocultures, destroying our natural biodiversity. These exotic species can reduce crop yields, destroy native plant and animal habitat, damage recreational opportunities, clog waterways, lower land values and poison humans and live-stock.

Noxious and nuisance weeds affect everyone. Weeds do not obey property lines or jurisdictional boundaries. It takes a coordinated effort to prevent new weeds from establishing and to control and eradicate the weeds already here. Having an established and healthy plant community prevents invasion and can crowd out weedy species.

Another reason to keep your yard or property nuisance and noxious weed free is wildfire. We live in a high desert, low rainfall area. Due to the volatility of plant biomass as it accumulates, fires can easily get out of control and ravage across the land, destroying habitat and homes in its wake. It takes but one summer to see how easily the land is destroyed by wildfires and years, even decades, to watch it try to come back to its former glory. No one wants a home to be destroyed or a family left out in the cold because of a fire which could have been prevented by implementing a preventative weed control program.

Weeds take advantage of opportunity. Open up the ground in some way; such as digging a trench, planting a garden, plowing a field, or even simply driving across your property, and weeds soon follow. They find the niches left open when we disturb the soil, plopping their seed down, and begin to grow. Once started, it takes an act of Congress to get rid of them. Billions of dollars are spent on controlling noxious and nuisance weeds every year. Herbicides, mowing, digging, hoeing, equipment, fuel, manpower, dollar after dollar is poured into our soil in an effort to eradicate unwanted plants. Does it have to be that way? Not necessarily.

**Go Native!**

The Columbia Basin was once home to a diverse population of wildflowers, grasses and shrubs. Wildlife, birds, butterflies and bees were abundant. Drought tolerant species, able to tolerate arid soils, irregular rainfall and wide temperature fluctuations were the norm. Healthy native plant communities kept out invasive weeds and provided food for Native American tribes and the local wildlife who called this area home.

**Successful Revegetation of native and naturalized plants is a sound, long term goal.**

In a balanced ecosystem, native plants are the foundation of a living community. Native plants, birds and insects have all evolved together to meet each other's needs, perfectly. Not simply preferred, many native plants are key requirements in the lifecycle of the myriad species that depend upon them for survival. Native plants are drought tolerant for our low rainfall area, less than 10" annually, to the extent that they are planted where they can thrive without additional resources. That means no watering, fertilizing, or weeding, once native plant stands have become established. That can mean years of not worrying about pesky weeds!

**Native, Heritage and Xeriscape**

Native plants are indigenous to a given geographic area in geologic time. Plants that existed on the North American continent before European settlement are North American native plants.

Heritage Gardens are landscaped areas designed to honor the cultural and natural heritage of the Columbia River Basin while utilizing sustainable gardening practices.

Xeriscape (pronounced zeri-i-scape) is the term for gardens which conserve water and energy through creative gardening. Xeriscape gardens may include limited areas where water is applied in controlled amounts and locations. Plants are selected for their ability to thrive in tough conditions, low water usage, and ability to add beauty.

Type	Common Name	Scientific name	Sun	Enjoyed By	Bloom	Color	Native
Grass	Crested Wheatgrass*	Agropyron cristatum					
Grass	Great Basin Wildrye*	Leymus cinereus			Summer		
Grass	Indian Ricegrass	Achnatherum hymenoides			Year-round		
Grass	Needle-and-Thread Grass	Hesperostipa comata			Year-round		
Grass	Sand Dropseed*	Sporobolus cryptandrus			Summer		
Grass	Sandberg's Bluegrass*	Poa secunda			Early Summer		
Grass	Siberian Wheatgrass*	Agropyron fragile					
Grass	Sherman Big Bluegrass	Poa secunda (formerly P. ampla)			Early Summer		
Grass	Snake River Wheatgrass*	Elymus wawawaiensis					
Grass	Tall Wheatgrass*	Thinopyrum ponticum					
Grass	Thickspike Wheatgrass*	Elymus lanceolatus ssp. lanceolatus			Summer		
Flower	Arrowleaf Basalmroot	Balsamorhiza sagittata			Late Spring	Yellow	
Flower	Arrowleaf Buckwheat	Eriogonum compositum			Summer	Yellow	
Flower	Blue Mt. Prairie Clover	Dalea ornata			Summer	Purple	
Flower	Carey's Balsamroot	Balsamorhiza careyana			Early Spring	Yellow	
Flower	Desert Indian Paintbrush	Castilleja chromosa			Early Spring	Yellow-	
Flower	Gooseberry-leaf Globemallow	Sphaeralcea grossularifolia			Summer		
Flower	Munro's Globemallow	Sphaeralcea munroana			Summer	Orange	
Flower	Palmer Penstemon	Penstemon palmeri			Summer	Pink	
Flower	Sand Penstemon	Penstemon acuminatus			Late Spring	Blue	
Flower	Silky Lupine	Lupinus sericeus			Early Summer		
Flower	Thyme-leaved Buckwheat	Eriogonum thymoides			Spring	Pink, Yellow	
Flower	Utah Ladyfinger Milkvetch	Astragalus utahensis			Early Spring		
Shrub	Antelope Bitterbrush	Purshia tridentata			Spring	Yellow	
Shrub	Apache Plume	Fallugia paradoxa			Summer	White	
Shrub	Big Sagebrush	Artemisia tridentata			Midsummer	Green	
Shrub	Fourwing Saltbush/Shadescale	Atriplex canescens			Late Spring	evergreen	
Shrub	Fringed Sagebrush	Artemisia frigida			Summer	shrub	
Shrub	Gray or Rubber Rabbitbrush	Ericameria nauseosa			Fall	Gray	
Shrub	Green Rabbitbrush	Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus			Spring	Yellow	
Shrub	Mountain Big Sagebrush	Artemisia tridentata vaseyana			Summer	Evergreen	
Shrub	Purple Sage	Salvia dorrii			Early Summer	Purple	
Shrub	Shadescale Saltbrush	Atriplex confertifolia			Early Summer	White	
Shrub	Winterfat	Krascheninnikovia lanata			Late Spring	Light Gray	
Tree	Desert Willow	Chiopsis linearis			Late Spring	Purple	
Tree	Western Juniper	Juniperus occidentalis			Early Spring	Evergreen	

Prefers Sun
Utilized by Birds

Sun to Partial Shade
Butterflies

Sun to Shade
Bees

Wildlife

*Adapted from the Franklin Conservation District Heritage List provided by Heather Wendt, and information provided by Glenn Reihle of the NRCS Pasco.*