

We use a rechargeable hedge trimmer to collect seeds of native plants. With an easy modification and an inverter that plugs into a vehicle cigarette lighter, the trimmer is ready to harvest seeds as we travel about.

KEY WORDS

seed harvest, native plant

NOMENCLATURE

USDA NRCS (2004)

At Bluebird Nursery, we use a battery-operated hedge trimmer for seed collection. After reading about a gas-powered trimmer (van der Grinten and Ayers 2000), we thought a battery-operated unit might suit our needs better for 3 reasons: 1) battery-operated units are lighter; 2) no need to fuss with mixing and carrying fuel; and 3) battery-operated units are easy to start and are quieter. We use a Black and Decker, 20-inch Hedgehog Cordless Trimmer (Model # CHT500), which is widely available from any hardware store for approximately US\$ 89; extra batteries are about US\$ 40. Our trimmer weighs 3.8 kg (8.4 lb), so it is lightweight enough to use all day. Following the directions of van der Grinten and Ayers (2000), we attached a plastic tub to the trimmer to facilitate seed collection. We have used it on species of *Carex* L. (Cyperaceae), *Coreopsis* L. (Asteraceae), *Gaillardia* Foug. (Asteraceae), shorter *Pentstemon* Schmidel (Scrophulariaceae), and *Veronica* L. (Scrophulariaceae), but it works very well on just about any species with seed heads at a uniform height.

We carry 2 charged batteries with us into the field, and that has been enough for our collecting efforts. Many variables, such as tough stems, however, affect battery life, so you may want to carry more than two. We use an inverter purchased to recharge our laptop computer while on the road to recharge the batteries for the trimmer. The inverter plugs into the cigarette lighter and has two 110 v outlets that can be used to

power the recharging unit for the trimmer batteries. The inverter costs about US\$ 100 and can be found at most auto parts stores. It is important that you remember a few points: 1) you need to match the wattage of the inverter to the needs of the trimmer battery charger; 2) a rapid charger for a large trimmer (18 v) will take a lot more power than a slow charger for a 12 v trimmer—as the wattage output of the inverter increases so does the price; and 3) only use the inverter while driving—if you shut your vehicle off with the inverter plugged in, it will eventually run the vehicle battery down.

REFERENCES

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CORDLESS HEDGE TRIMMER FOR SEED COLLECTION

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Top: Electric trimmer with plastic collection tub; middle: top view showing tub attached to the metal plate that is attached to the cutting bar; bottom: bottom view showing tub attachment to the metal plate and cutting bar. Photo by Mike Hamernik