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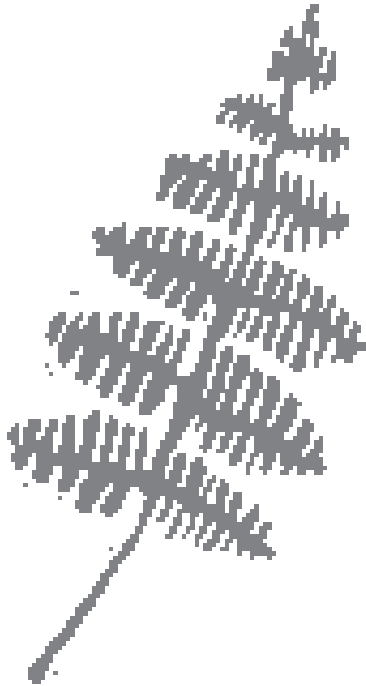
Native
Plants
*Propagating
and Planting*



OREGON STATE
UNIVERSITY



Nursery Technology
Cooperative



SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS

NATIVE PLANTS *PROPAGATING AND PLANTING*

December 9-10, 1998

ROBIN ROSE & DIANE L. HAASE

Coordinators & Editors

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



Welcome and Keynote

- 5 Native Plants: What Have You Done For Us Lately?
Paul G. Risser

Seed Propagation

- 7 Seed Banking for the Future
Andrea N. Raven
- 12 Adaptive Genetic Variation of Broadleaf Lupine (*Lupinus latifolius*) and Implications for Seed Transfer
David L. Doede, Caitlin Cray, Joan Trindle, and Dale Darris
- 18 Storage of Rare and Endangered Plants in *ex situ* Germplasm Banks
Christina Walters
- 23 Techniques to Determine Total Viability in Native Seed
Nancy Vivrette
- 25 Seed Germination and Storability Studies of 69 Plant Taxa Native to the Willamette Valley Wet Prairie
Edward O. Guerrant Jr., and Andrea Raven
- 32 Propagating Native Grass Seed and Seedlings
David Steinfeld and Colleen Archibald
- 38 Extraction and Germination of Pacific Madrone Seed
Constance A. Harrington, Cynthia C. Lodding, and Joseph M. Kraft

Vegetative Propagation

- 43 Micropropagation: An Important Tool in the Conservation of Endangered Hawaiian Plants
Nellie Sugii and Charles Lamoureux
- 49 Use of Mycorrhizae for Native Plant Production
Ted St. John
- 54 Asexual Plant Propagation: Increasing Your Odds of Success
Joseph D. Scmianna
- 60 Rooting Ability of Fifteen Native Shrubs Using Hardwood Cuttings in the Field and Greenhouse
Dale C. Darris, Jim Brown and D'Lynn Williams
- 68 Comparing Micropropagation Protocols for a Herbaceous Perennial, a Woody Shrub, and a Conifer.
R. Kasten Dumroese, John L. Edson, Annette D. Leege-Brusven, and David L. Wenny
- 75 Salvaging Plants for Propagation and Revegetation
Susan Buis
- 80 Comparing Biomass and Taxane Concentrations to Maximize Yield in Rooted Cuttings of Pacific Yew (*Taxus brevifolia* Nutt)
N.C. Vance, R.G. Kelsey, and D.L. Copes

Native Plant Projects

- 86 Restoration of a Grazed Riparian Area
Douglas D. McCreary
- 92 Restoration of community Structure and Composition in Cheatgrass Dominated Rangelands
Roger Rosentreter

-
- 100 Growing Endangered Plants to Save Them: Germinating, Propagating, and Restoring Pink Sandverbena
Thomas N. Kaye, Melissa Kirkland, and Nicholas Testa
- 108 Restoring Idaho's Henry's Fork: A Case Study
R. Kasten Dumroese, Trent A. Stumph, and David L. Wenny
- 113 Initial Observations on the Effects of Fire on Willamette Valley Wetland Prairie Vegetation
Trevor Taylor
- 118 Wildlife Considerations When Planning Plant Projects
Dale Nolte
- 124 Wetland Restoration of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area: Success and Failures
Rick Storre
- 125 The Reproductive Ecology of Broadleaved Trees and Shrubs: An Innovative Educational Approach
Edward C. Jensen and Debra J. Anderson
- 130 Vegetation and Erosion: A Literature Survey.
Elliott Menashe
- 136 Genetic Studies in Native Plants
Valerie Hipkins
- 142 Ruminations And Ramblings About Native Plant Propagation
Thomas D. Landis

Poster Summaries

- 151 Seed Germination of Fox Sedge and Broadleaf Arrowhead
Emerenciana G. Hurd and Nancy L. Shaw
- 153 Propagation and Establishment of Hardstem Bulrush at Johnson Lake, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon
Dale C. Darris and Treg D. Owings
- 155 Adaptive Genetic Variation of *Elymus glaucus* (Blue Wildrye) in Northeast Oregon: Implications for Seed Collection and Management
Vicky Erickson
- 157 Propagation and Establishment of a Native Wetland Plant Species: *Beckmannia syzigachne*
Theresa R. Flessner
- 159 Selecting Native Plants Using VegSpec – A Web-based Expert System
David A. Pyke
- 161 Vegetative Propagation of *Pinus maximartinezii*
José L. Romero and Barry Goldfarb
- 164 Collecting and Propagating Native California Taxads: A case study of Pacific yew (*Taxus brevifolia*) and California nutmeg (*Torreya californica*)
David Kaplow
- 166 Evaluating Seed Increase Potential of Broadleaf Lupine
Joan D.C. Trindle, David Doede, Caitlin Cray and Dale Darris
- 168 Planting the Future
Susan Maginnis

170 Biographies

Risser gets back to botany at Oregon State conference

By RITA-LYN SANDERS

Gazette Times reporter

Researchers attending a conference on native plants at Oregon State University Wednesday morning got to see a side of Paul Risser that often gets lost amid his presidential duties — Risser the botanist.

As Risser warmed up to such topics as global warming and salmon habitat protection, it became clear he hasn't lost his scientific touch.

Before he took the helm at OSU, Risser taught and conducted research at several universities — beginning in 1963 when he landed his first position at the University of Wisconsin.

But since he has taken the administrative road from vice president of research to provost to president, Risser has traded his white lab coat for a blazer.

Risser may not spend much time anymore using machines like a bomb calorimeter to measure the energy of plants, but he enjoys tapping into his scientific



Paul Risser
OSU president

'The intent is to stimulate us to think about native plants in new ways.'

OSU President Paul Risser

roots whenever he can.

Risser had the opportunity to speak to more than 350 researchers attending a two-day conference entitled "Native Plants: Propagating and Planting."

Digging into his botany background, Risser called his talk, "Native Plants: What Have You Done for Us Lately?"

"The intent is to stimulate us to think about native plants in new ways," Risser said. That means seeing them as more than sources of food, products or wildlife habitat.

After taking a closer look, scientists discovered that some native plants in Wisconsin do more than look pretty and welcome spring.

Two flowers — dog-toothed violet and Dutchman's breeches — grow for six weeks just as the snow melts and before leaves appear on deciduous trees.

Because the plants live early in the season, they play a key role in capturing nutrients that otherwise might be washed away by the melting snow.

Risser said researchers have also had many conversations about how plants could be used to capture carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere.

Some scientists say the gas has been the largest contributor to a phenomenon identified as global warming, or the increase of the Earth's average temperature.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has discussed offering "carbon credits" to farmers who grow or leave crops that capture carbon dioxide, Risser said.

And in Washington, there's a program that pays for the planting of hedges in flood plain areas where fences often are washed out.

Researchers transplanted the idea to use hedges as property dividers from England, where hedgerows have dotted the landscape for centuries.

There are many opportunities to use native plants to help solve some dilemmas, Risser said.

Rita-Lyn Sanders covers higher education for the Gazette-Times. She can be reached by e-mail at sandersr@gtconnect.com or by phone at 758-9526.