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CURRY Currents

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IN THIS ISSUE

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Native Hedgerows

by Darcy Grahek

Stillwater Natives Nursery, Bandon, OR

The diversity of native shrubs and trees on the south coast provides many choices for people aiming to build a 'living fence' on their property that also feeds pollinators or songbirds with a natural food variety. These plants evolved here in our southern Oregon maritime ecoregion over millions of years. They will tolerate conditions that would surely sink imported plant species. No extra watering and certainly no fertilizer is needed for these native plants. Fertilizer, in fact, is mostly detrimental to them. They often grow very close together, made possible because of the symbiotic relationships they have with the soil. Along driveways or other edges, these plant communities create a beautiful and functional hedgerow.

A traditional hedge consists of just one, densely grown plant species.

Using these indigenous plants in our landscapes allows us to bend all kinds of traditional horticultural "rules". A hedge is traditionally a row of one plant species, often evergreen, meant to provide an edge that is a screen, a windbreak, a backdrop, or a border. How about using a mix of native plants to create a hedgerow instead of a hedge? A hedgerow is three or more species planted a few feet apart and meant to grow together in the sense of a thicket, but narrow, as with a hedge. Along with the ecological benefits listed below, a hedgerow can soften the look of a fence, a wall, a building or a neighbor's yard.

Native plant hedgerows provide multiple ecological functions. They create shelter for beneficial insects, pollinators and songbirds. These creatures risk a lot going out in the open in search of food. Hedgerows become safety zones and homesites. No one walks or drives where they are planted and so inhabitants are relatively undisturbed. The migrating birds as well as local birds eat the Summer and Fall berries and the

A hedgerow, in contrast to a hedge, consists of three or more species planted close together to form a functional edge. Most of the tall plants along this hedgerow are cascara trees. They make a great addition to hedgerows and the wildlife love them. (Photo Credit: https://www.growingwithnature.org/)

Spring nesting birds use the larvae of butterflies and moths to feed their hatchlings. The environmental services are multiple and pollination is certainly one of the most powerful. Roughly eighty percent of flowering plants need to be pollinated by insects. Decline of local species due to human impact is a very real concern. Your yard or property line is an excellent place to include a little wild space and help offset these net losses.

Native plants also have the ability to tolerate a wider range of soils than most landscape plants, from sandy to clay. Some native plant species will also tolerate the summer wind or salt air. A hedgerow of these more hardy plants allows for more vulnerable plants to be grown on the off-wind side.

Here is a sample of appropriate native flowering shrubs for our ecoregion:

- Red Flowering Currant
- Western Azalea
- Osoberry (Klamath Plum)
- Red Osier Dogwood
- Nootka Rose
- Oceanspray
- Douglas spirea
- Mock Orange
- Ceanothus thyrsiflorus (Blueblossom)
- Red Elderberry
- Pacific crabapple
- Pink Honeysuckle (Lonicera hispidula)
- Manzanita (Hairy)
- Silk Tassel (Garrya elliptica)

Nootka roses are a great option to add to dense hedgerows. (Photo Credit: https://www.growingwithnature.org/)

If you're looking to ID any of these species on your own, it's easiest when they are flowering, typically between February and July.

We have gardens and a small orchard on our farm so feeding bees and other pollinators and beneficial insects is in our best interest. Flowers feed the little garden helpers but hedgerows house them and allow them to reproduce. Most of our native bees live under the ground and thus must be somewhere without foot traffic - human, livestock or wildlife. A local non-migrating butterfly will lay eggs on many of our native shrubs and small trees. Those well-wrapped pupae need to be somewhere safe over the winter, until Springtime sunshine will coax them out of their cocoons.

If you think a hedgerow is for you, a little research into the conditions of your site will inform you about which species might do best. Is the site sunny, dry, sloped, flat, soggy? How much sun is in the flowering season? Low winter sun doesn't affect plants too much so you really must study it in Spring and Summer. Ground water often lurks under flat ground, especially if you hit hardpan when you dig in your yard. When plants are placed in shade or part shade, they definitely need less water. The South Coast's most favorable planting window is late October through January. Plants need to get their roots established before the summer drought arrives. Your hedgerow species will likely grow and fill in faster with some supplemental summer water.

Planning for a hedgerow could start with deciding just how much room you have to dedicate to the chosen plants. Is it a long space at least four feet wide? Perhaps it needs to be even wider depending on species choice and whether you plan to clip it or leave it to grow naturally. Some of the shrubs can become more than 6 feet across so do your research. Choose species that have an affinity for the same conditions and mature to a similar size. Create a planting pattern so that your spacing is uniform and placement of each species is varied - one approach is to plant two to four rows of mixed species. If you can share a hedgerow with a neighbor, it can benefit two landscapes and perhaps the cost and labor can be split. Locating needed plants can take 6-8 months so it leaves a lot of time to prepare the soil where the hedgerow is going. Locate native plant nurseries near you and think about taking a class on how to propagate plants from cuttings. Growing plants from cuttings can be an affordable way to amass a large quantity of needed plants. Our nursery provides most of the plants listed above and can contract grow out plugs of various shrubs and perennials, using only organic methods.

This hedgerow was planted with a mix of Cascaras, red-flowering currants, Osoberries, Nootka roses, snowberries, black twinberries, Douglas maples, and flowers. This mix helps ensure that something will fill in any gaps. (Photo credit: https://www.growingwithnature.org/)

Preparing the ground for a hedgerow involves first removing any invasive species, including root and seed. Here is a method of how weeds can be eliminated by cutting out the light they receive: First, lay down cardboard over the hedgerow area. Then, cover it with 4 to 6 inches of mulch, which might be chipped wood, bark dust of any size, drain rock, or other hardy material. The decomposing carbon encourages life in the soil. When given this covering blanket of carbon, the huge variety of soil organisms such as beetles, worms, nematodes, protozoa and good bacteria will go to work eating your weeds, tops, roots and all. The down side to this method is that it takes several months, not counting summer. Soil organisms also evolved with drought and they will likely take the summer off from consuming the old vegetation under the cardboard. We sometimes use black landscape fabric that completely cuts out the light, which can be a quicker method but doesn't provide that decomposing carbon. When you can pull the covering back and see only bare dirt, your site is ready to be planted.

Immediately after planting, if rain is not in the forecast, water the plants well to remove any air pockets underground which can dry out and kill exposed roots. Long-term care might involve pruning back or topping the hedgerow every few years or as needed. Pruning right after bloom is recommended and increases the next year's bloom. If you have deer pressure, planting at least ten of each species may help as the deer will get tired of eating one type of plant and try something else.

This young hedgerow bordering a field features native plants that provide habitat for beneficial insects and pollinators. (Photo Credit: Janet Donnelly, Oregon State University)

Growing a hedgerow is some work initially but the payoff is a row of highly functional plants that look good, stabilize the soil and provide for increased wildlife diversity. Whether it is just 10 feet or 100 feet, it is one of the most effective habitat types you can create. Habitat restoration is a win-win effort providing great satisfaction and very low maintenance for an initial effort.

About the Author

Darcy Grahek is a native Oregonian and is a lifelong gardener. Darcy has been working on south coast landscapes for 35 years, focusing mostly on native plants since 2005. She currently owns and operates Stillwater Natives Nursery, in Bandon, stocked with only native plants. She specializes in propagating plants for pollinators. The plant nursery website is www.stillwaternativesnursery.com and Darcy can be reached at info@stillwaternativesnursery.com

Get Involved

Local Board Meetings. Please contact us for information on how to join.

Curry Soil and Water Conservation District - Last Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Curry Watersheds Partnership Office.

Contact Liesl Coleman for more information:
liesl.coleman@currywatersheds.org

Lower Rogue Watershed Council - 3rd Tuesday of the month at 5:30 pm at the Curry Watersheds Partnership Office.

Contact Kelly Timchak for more information:
kelly@currywatersheds.org

South Coast Watershed Council - 4th Thursday of the month at 3:00 pm, rotating location between Port Orford, Gold Beach, and Brookings.

Contact Miranda Gray for more information:
miranda.gray@currywatersheds.org

Upcoming Events & Community Resources

Curry Watersheds Partnership will be hosting two upcoming presentations at the Curry Public Library. Both events are free and open to the public and will start at 5:30pm.

February 9th: 'Seals and Sea Lions of Curry County' presented by Susan Reimer, Marine Mammal Assistant Project Leader with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

March 30th: 'Lamprey of Curry County' presented by biologist Stewart Reid.
Check out our website calendar for more details: https://www.currywatersheds.org/calendar/

If you're connected to or love the flora of Oregon's South Coast, you're invited to join the NEWLY REACTIVATED South Coast Native Plant Society of Oregon chapter. The chapter is currently meeting on a quarterly basis. For more information contact South Coast chapter president Charmaine Mitchell at cmainie@gmail.com

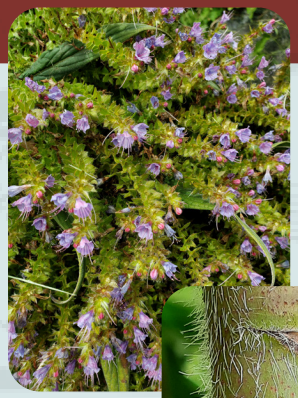
Weed Alert!

Pine Echium (Echium pininana)

Listed in 2022 after being on the State's internal "Watch List" for almost a decade, Pine Echium is a wonder to look at and lives true to its other common name, Tower of Jewels. The problem is that over that same time it has started to escape into our natural areas like our sensitive coastal cliffs and beaches. It is a known invader in coastal California, yet is prized by garden enthusiasts for its tall, purple spike of flowers. This biennial and sometimes triennial flowers once after growing a large stalked rosette for 2-3 years and then dies. The massive flower can produce upwards of 200,000 seeds per plant.

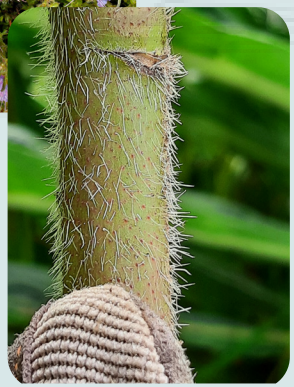
A single Pine Echium plant removed from the fairgrounds in Gold Beach.

STOP!



Close-up of Pine Echium flowers.

Now is the time to stop this plant from becoming costlier to control. The plant is cross pollinated and produces prolific seeds that germinate readily and grow rapidly, reaching 15 feet with its massive flower spike. While some may say, "the bees really like it", it's important to remember that as a non-native species here the local pollinator species don't necessarily benefit. Please, lend a hand and don't share this plant. Pulling seedlings by hand works well to manage any seed bank you already have, but do protect yourself from the fine "fiberglass" like hairs found all over its stem.



Close-up of the "fiberglass" like hairs found all over the Pine Echium stem.

GO!

Native Replacements

- ✓ Douglas spirea (Spiraea douglasii),
- ✓ Ceanothus (California Lilac),
- ✓ or Douglas aster (Symphyotrichum subspicatum).

These natives are also a wonder to look at and benefit local pollinators..

Douglas aster

Douglas spirea

Ceanothus

(Lower two images source: www.stillwaternativesnursery.com)

Reports from the Field

Invasive Weed Management

A majority of our most invasive non-native plants on the south coast have stemmed from nurseries and exotic gardens created for our visual enjoyment. This dates clear back to when these non-natives were first introduced, whether it was intentional or not. Identifying these beautiful invaders can sometimes be a dubious task, especially when they're offered as such for retail. Jubata grass or otherwise known as Pampas grass, is a prime suspect on the market and in residential landscapes. Gorgeous plumes and a tropical feel, give this invasive tyrant a desirable wink among clean bark-laden yards.

A giant field of Jubata grass threatening to overtake anything it's path.

Pine Echium, another escaped ornamental looms among the countryside.

Those beautified plumes however, distribute 1000's of seeds every year. Jubata grass seeds can also spread great distances in our strong coastal winds. Pine Echium is another perfect example of an ornamental escape artist that is starting to spread Luckily Pine Echium has been recognized by the state and was recently added to the state weed list.

It's these so-called desirable non-native plants that are disrupting the ecology of our native plant diversity. Not only do our ecosystems suffer from dense populations of non-natives, they pose other risks such as increased wildfire and soil erosion. Many of these issues are continually ignored, only creating larger problems in the future. No matter how small the impact may seem, we can all do our part to protect our native plants. As we near the next planting season this winter and spring, some consideration can be made on what should be introduced into planting plans. Instead of regarding vegetation as desirable or undesirable, even when considering potential invasive behavior, the real question that behooves us is: Is it native?

Much of our time and energy here at the Curry Watersheds Partnership is spent re-establishing native species to our landscapes through varying restoration techniques, and nearly every restoration project has a portion of work that is spent on non-native species removal before attempting to establish native plants in that space.

This winter, we will be moving forward with some unique methods in partnership with landowners in Agness, where a riparian area is suffering from an overgrown population of English ivy and Himalayan blackberry. The landowners will be introducing goats to provide long-term maintenance in some of the larger sections, after first manually treating all the invasive weeds. Once the invasives are under control, native trees and shrubs will be planted in the riparian zone.

(Upper image) The field in Agness where Himalayan blackberry has taken over native plants, and will eventually be grazed by goats in order to maintain native plants. (Lower image) The riparian area next to Slide Creek in Agness being taken over by the invasive English Ivy.

Photos of native riparian plantings after plant establishment activities. The non-native grass around the plantings has been mowed to give the plants access to more nutrients and sunlight. Species in these photos include Black cottonwood, Pacific ninebark, Oregon ash, Black twinberry, willow, Osoberry, and Mock Orange.

Native Plant Establishment

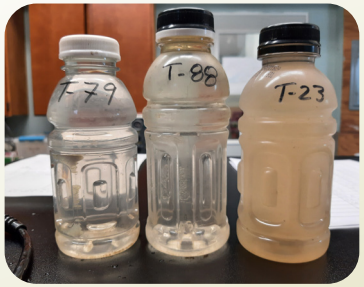
Elsewhere in the county, we are continuing to establish approximately 10,000 native trees and shrubs that have been planted since 2018. Plant establishment includes the mowing of non-native grasses and cleaning of protective cages. The combination of these measures will improve riparian function within the project area, as well as reduce the chance of non-native plants infesting other sensitive areas along the creek. Some of the native species we like to plant in these riparian areas are Pacific ninebark, Oregon ash, Black twinberry, Oceanspray, Red osier dogwood, rhododendron, Osoberry, vine maple, Coast Redwood, Western Red Cedar, and Port Orford cedar

During the 2022-23 planting season (November-March), we will be planting ~9,000 Port Orford cedar (Chamaecyparis lawsoniana) seedlings that are resistant to Phytophthora lateralis, an invasive root fungus that was accidentally introduced to the south coast in the 1950's, and has decimated Port-Orford-cedar (POC) throughout much of its native range in southwest Oregon and northwest California. POC is a long-lived, stately conifer that can reach over 200 feet in height and 10 feet in diameter. It was used by Native Americans for cultural, medicinal, and spiritual life; it was once the highest valued forest product on the southern Oregon coast because the wood is highly prized for its beauty, aroma, and resistance to decay; and it was integral to watershed health and salmonid habitat because as a riparian species, POC provides high quality shade and extremely long-lasting instream wood. Sadly, POC is now "functionally" absent from most private forestland in Curry and Coos counties, and it has

This winter, we are planting approximately 9,000 disease-resistant Port Orford Cedars throughout Curry County.

been greatly diminished on our federal forests and State Parks because the root disease kills essentially 100% of the trees that it infects. Since the mid-1980's, the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Oregon State University have been working to develop resistant POC seedlings through a selective breeding program, using trees in the wild that demonstrate natural resistance to the root disease. In the early 2000's, commercial nurseries started propagating POC seedlings from the resistant seed, but a number of those nurseries closed during the 2008-09 economic recession, and by the late 2010's, resistant seedlings were no longer readily available to the public. In 2020, the Curry Watersheds Partnership (CWP) purchased POC seed from the US Forest Service and contracted with a commercial nursery (PRT USA, Inc.) to grow 1-year and 2-year-old seedlings. In the winter of 2022-23, we will plant 1-year seedlings in the riparian reserves of the National Forest in the upper Elk River

watershed, to establish the resistant genetics on the landscape as part of the Elk River Coho Salmon Recovery Strategic Action Plan. The 2-year seedlings will be planted on riparian restoration project sites in the Floras Creek, Sixes River, Elk River, Port Orford, Chetco River, and Winchuck River watersheds; where competition from pasture grasses and invasive species such as a gorse, Himalayan blackberry, and English ivy warrant larger planting stock. The PRT Nursery will grow an additional 10,000 POC in 2023 for CWP projects, and seedlings will set aside for purchase by private landowners in Curry and Coos county.



Water sample collected by volunteers during a spring storm showing some of the variety in how much sediment is transported in different streams.

This winter marks the second year of our Storm Chasers program - where volunteers collect water quality samples after large storm events to help us understand how these storms affect our rivers. Last year was a great start to this program. 17 volunteers collected a total of 128 water samples at 45 sites across 3 storms. We successfully captured the first big storm (aka the first flush) of the season, a large mid-season storm, and one of the last large storms of the season. This spacing out of storms helps us understand if and how conditions change throughout the season. The information we collected is helping us better understand how much sediment is being contributed to our rivers, and where. This allows us to identify potential concerns and work with willing landowners to address them.

(Below) The Sixes River just downstream of the 101 bridge after a larger spring storm.

This year we are off to a great start yet again, and are poised to get even better moving forward. Our current funding for this project has restricted our efforts so far to focusing on watersheds in the northern part of the county; primarily Elk River, Sixes Rives, and Floras Creek. However, we just received a grant from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) to expand Storm Chasers to the rest of the county. That grant will become active this spring, and we will be looking to expand our efforts in the coming year. If you're interested in becoming a storm chaser, or know anyone who might be, please fill out our volunteer form at www.currywatersheds.org/monitoring/ or contact us directly.

Education & Outreach

4th graders in Gold Beach show off all of the garbage they collected from the beach.

The Youth Education Program is thrilled to welcome Jen Sauer on board as the new Youth Education Specialist in January of 2023! Winter and spring will yield some exciting new potential for capacity building and expansion of current projects across school gardens, outdoor classrooms experiences, and field projects. So far this winter, the gardens are asleep for a little while, and students are eagerly making seed schedules and plans for spring planting. The wetlands are going through seasonal changes and being monitored by fifth and sixth graders in Port Orford, who are also becoming accomplished trail builders. The beaches around Gold Beach have been beautified by 4th graders cleaning up garbage and learning about ocean currents and tides.

6th grade students in Port Orford strike a pose while building a new trail in the wetlands behind their school. Students created leaf identification resources to make sure their work targets invasive plants.

After winter break, students in Gold Beach and Port Orford will be exploring mile-long stretches of the beach as part of Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition CoastWatch program. Students will act as citizen scientists for the program, recording quarterly reports on the conditions, wildlife, human activity, and changes to their adopted stretch of coastline. K-12 students all across Curry County will also have the opportunity to learn about snowy plovers, king tides, and marine debris in an exciting workshop opportunity that invites students to create art and sculpture using marine debris salvaged from plover habitat. The workshop will be brought to students in Brookings, Gold Beach, and Port Orford. High school students are eligible to enroll in a new outdoor leadership pilot program that recruits, trains, and supports high school students in acting as student leaders for Gold Beach 6th graders attending outdoor school in Veneta, Oregon. The YEP Program is partnering with outdoor school provider Camp Fire Wilani to create this opportunity for leadership, conservation education, teaching practice, and outdoor experience. High school participants will learn about the Beetles learning cycle and outdoor education techniques that they will put to use as mentors during outdoor school in the spring. During training sessions, the students will also have the chance to participate in outdoor recreation activities within Curry County. Programming for high school outdoor leadership students will begin in January 2023.

Watch our videos to learn more about our restoration and education programs.

You can view them on our YouTube channel here:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-DImJjA4SRCiuPYLnxnuWA

or on our website:
https://www.currywatersheds.org/about-us/

Education Edition - Curry Watersheds Partnership

Rogue River Estuary - Curry Watersheds Partnership

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Liesl Coleman Curry Soil and Water Conservation District Manager
Barbara Grant NRCS Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Technician
Miranda Gray South Coast Watershed Council Coordinator
Matthew Hubbard Field Technician
Drew Harper Riparian Management Coordinator
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Jen Sauer Youth Education Specialist
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Matt Swanson Contracted Restoration Project Manager
Kelly Timchak Lower Rogue Watershed Council Coordinator
Dustin Williams Vegetation Management Program Project Implementation Manager
Tammy Wills Operations Coordinator

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Curry Watersheds Partnership includes the Curry County Soil and Water Conservation District, the South Coast and Lower Rogue Watershed Councils, and the Curry Watersheds Nonprofit, working together to support our communities to care for our lands and waters, now and into the future. We rely solely on grants and donations and you can make a donation by visiting our website or contacting us at the information listed above.