



Evergreen Starts  
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WASHINGTON STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

# RIPARIAN PLANT PROPAGATION PROGRAM

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PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Effective on July 1, 2025.

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# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## 1. Background

The Riparian Plant Propagation Program (RPPP) was established in fiscal year 2023 to support statewide salmon recovery efforts and the many co-benefits riparian habitats provide. This program is designed to boost the availability of native trees and shrubs needed for riparian restoration projects. The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) has been appropriated approximately \$1.3 million in operating funds per fiscal year to support these efforts.

The program is implemented through three components: propagation, cultivation, and restoration. If eligibility requirements are met, participants may engage in more than one program category

### Propagation

This component of the program focuses on working with nurseries to increase the propagation of native trees and shrubs to be provided to districts and other restoration groups for streamside projects. SCC currently supports this through two to three year contract grows, which allow for long-term planning and procurement of difficult-to-source species.

### Cultivation

This component of the program provides annual funding to conservation districts to purchase trees and/or shrubs, create, expand, and/or maintain holding sites where plants are grown out until ready to be planted in riparian habitats.

### Restoration

This component of the program focuses on matching locally grown plants with districts and other restoration groups to be implemented into riparian habitat projects.

### Proviso Language

\$1,300,000 of the general fund state appropriation for fiscal year 2023, under a budget proviso, is provided solely for the commission to develop a riparian plant propagation program of native trees and shrubs to implement riparian restoration projects that meet riparian zone requirements established by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Plants will be made available for free or at a reduced cost to restoration projects.



## 2. Propagation

### 2.1. Eligibility

#### Eligible Applicants

Nurseries interested in doing two to three year contract grows of select native riparian trees and/or shrubs are eligible to participate in this part of the program. Participating nurseries are required to have a valid business license in the state of Washington and any additional licenses, certifications, or permits necessary to comply with all applicable federal and state regulations required to grow and distribute native plants. There is no minimum size for plant orders or nursery operations, however, participants must have expertise in propagating native riparian trees and/or shrubs and adequate facilities to complete accepted orders.

#### Eligible Project Types

This section of the program supports only the propagation and delivery of native riparian trees and shrubs to districts and other restoration groups. Please see below for further details on each eligible category:

#### Propagation of native riparian trees and shrubs

This includes pots, plugs, bareroot, and live stake plants of various sizes. Plant orders are determined by SCC and agreed upon by awarded nurseries.

#### Delivery

This includes shipping or delivery to selected restoration groups as agreed upon when confirming orders. The timing of delivery is also agreed upon between both parties and is typically between fall and spring.

### 2.2. General Requirements

#### General Guidelines

Nurseries must apply through a competitive solicitation. During this process, applicants may bid on the quantity, species, plant size, and planting type (pots, bareroot, live stake, etc.) based on data provided by SCC. Species and/or quantities are grouped by the [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) Ecoregions of Washington map](#) and the Washington Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) [Washington Tree Seed Transfer Zone publication](#) to specify seed sourcing. Applicants will also be required to meet performance requirements that demonstrate their expertise in the propagation of healthy plants.

Awarded nurseries will be responsible for producing well-formed plants free from disease and damage that meet standards set by the American Standard for Nursery Stock (ANSI Z60.1). Nurseries must label plants with name, size and/or type, planting date, and seed and/or cutting source.

Awarded nurseries are responsible for ensuring propagated trees and/or shrubs are sourced from the correct seed zone as outlined in the solicitation and agreed upon in the final order. Sustainable harvesting of seeds and/or cuttings from healthy, mature plants is required. Nurseries may use purchased seeds, but must keep a record of their origin source.

Nurseries must also have a disease and pest management plan in place, including preventative measures and monitoring for early detection. If a disease or pest outbreak occurs, immediate action must be taken to contain the spread and records must be maintained, including any treatments applied.

The RPPP manager may schedule to inspect plant material and/or the nursery facilities awarded during the contract term to ensure compliance. The nursery must notify SCC if any issues arise with the plant order.

All awarded nurseries must adhere to the specific terms of their individual contract, which may include additional conditions beyond these guidelines.

## **Timeline and Funding Process**

The competitive solicitation to propagate trees and/or shrubs will be released each fiscal year in the spring (March – April). The solicitation process is 45 days in length, which includes a prebid conference and a Q&A period. The solicitation will be run through Washington’s Electronic Business Solution (WEBS) system. Register for WEBS at [pr-webs-vendor.des.wa.gov](https://pr-webs-vendor.des.wa.gov).

Proposals are evaluated by a committee comprised of SCC staff with a debrief and protest period available to request clarification on award decisions. Each year’s solicitation will provide a detailed timeline for that specific contract.

### **General Project Timeline**

- The project timeline begins after the 45-day solicitation process upon finalizing orders with the RPPP manager.
- Plant propagation will span two to three years depending on the plant species, with deliverables due by June 30 of the agreed upon year.
- Contracts may be extended by two additional one-year terms upon mutual agreement for plants that require a longer propagation period and/or as requested by restoration groups.
- The typical delivery window requested by restoration groups is between the fall and spring following the deliverable deadline.

Once awarded, final orders will be agreed upon between the nursery and the RPPP manager. These finalized orders will outline the location and the preferred delivery or pick-up time provided by the receiving restoration group(s). The nursery may be asked to provide a cost estimate for delivery.

Depending on the award, the nursery may be delivered to one or more restoration groups throughout the state of Washington. Delivery must be done in a manner that is not detrimental to the plants.

During the contract period, the awarded nursery will be responsible for any quality control issues. Final inspection of plants will only occur after delivery to the contract site and SCC will have up to 7 days after delivery to confirm approval or rejection. Any damage or disease may result in rejection and a deduction of the cost of the rejected plants from the final payment. Payment will be issued after inspection and approval of the delivered plants. SCC is unable to provide any down payments for the plants ordered.

If a portion of an order is completed early, nurseries may contact the RPPP manager to coordinate with restoration groups for early delivery. Any delivery requests outside of the agreed upon timeline will not be guaranteed and will be at the discretion of the restoration groups to accept the plants.

## 3. Cultivation

### 3.1. Eligibility

#### Eligible Applicants

All Washington conservation districts that possess expertise in cultivating and propagating woody plant materials and own or manage secured land are eligible for funding.

Multiple, adjacent districts are encouraged to work together to identify one holding site to grow to maturity native trees and shrubs until ready to be used in restoration projects.

- Districts that are partnering with non-profit, state, federal, private landowners, or tribal entities, who have existing greenhouses or land where plants can be cultivated, are welcome to apply for funding so long as they have a signed agreement in place prior to funds being awarded. The signed agreement must include the following elements: Guarantee the district's ongoing access and use of the site for the duration of the design life<sup>1</sup> of any RPPP funded infrastructure.
- Define roles and responsibilities of all parties involved.
- Outline a contingency plan in the event a partner can no longer fulfill obligations.

Districts are encouraged to share a draft agreement with the RPPP program manager or their regional manager prior to entering into it with a partnering entity.

#### Eligible Project Types

Allowable use of RPPP grant funds may be used for the purchase or procurement of native riparian trees and/or shrubs, expansion or improvement of existing holding sites, and maintenance of ongoing plant cultivation.

The creation of new holding sites is subject to geographic need. Holding sites funded with RPPP are intended to be used exclusively for RPPP plant storage and no other district plant sale operations. RPPP grant funds are prioritized for the cultivation of purchased trees and/or shrubs, with limited propagation allowed on a case-by-case basis. Please see below for further details of each eligible category:

#### Procurement of native riparian trees and shrubs

Conservation districts may directly procure plants of native riparian trees and/or shrubs for cultivation at holding sites where plants can be maintained until they are ready to be used in riparian restoration projects. Climate-adapted species or other species outside the defined scope of Washington native riparian trees and/or shrubs may also be procured, provided that their inclusion is justified in the application.

#### Seeds

Conservation districts may directly purchase or collect native riparian trees and/or shrub seeds for limited propagation in accordance with seed requirements in this document.

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<sup>1</sup> Natural Resources Conservation Service. (n.d.). Field Office Technical Guide: Glossary. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Retrieved July 2, 2025.

## **Infrastructure**

Including, but not limited to, irrigation or drip lines, fencing, plant coolers for bareroot storage, reasonably priced or sized greenhouses, and reasonably priced tractors.

## **Materials and Supplies**

Including, but not limited to, soil, potting containers, mulch, hoses, sprayers, gardening implements, tarping and/or solarization film.

## **Labor**

Including installation of holding site infrastructure and/or district staff or crew time to maintain cultivated plants. Examples include prepping fields, potting plants, seed collection, inspecting plants, watering, and/or weeding. Staff time associated with developing and coordinating the project is also an eligible expense. Examples include ordering plants, preparing or processing partner agreements, organizing delivery, and monitoring inventory.

If using a district work crew, copies of timesheets are required. If a work crew is subcontracted, a contract between the work crew and the district must be on file with the SCC and the invoice must be clearly broken down.

## **Overhead**

Overhead can be calculated as employee hours worked x employee rate (composite rate) x 25%.

## **Utilities**

Districts may use funding to cover utilities that pertain solely to their RPPP project. Including, but not limited to, greenhouse heating, electricity, water, space leasing, and garbage disposal. Utility costs must be justified in the application.

## **Repairs**

If unanticipated maintenance repair costs for existing RPPP project holding sites arise, please contact the RPPP manager before doing any work. Examples may include water system breakdowns, waterline replacement, pipe breakages, fence repairs, etc.

## **Other**

If uncertain whether an expense is eligible for funding, please contact the RPPP manager prior to submitting an application.

## **SCC General Guidelines**

All proposals must be entered into a Formstack application and contain a detailed description of the project(s).

A district may submit more than one application, but there is no guarantee that funding will be awarded to any project.

A single district may also apply as a regional plant or seed-holding hub for multiple districts. If serving as a regional hub, districts must create a written IAA among participating districts.



When creating or expanding a holding site, districts must ensure they have the long-term capacity to maintain plants for restoration. The minimum duration of maintaining a holding site must match or exceed the design life of any installed infrastructure.

The trees and shrubs must be provided at no charge for restoration projects. Districts may not collect a fee for providing the plants for any project. The RPPP manager may inspect cultivation sites to ensure that all work is underway or has been completed and that the location is secure with reasonable protection against theft. The RPPP manager may also inspect the plants to make sure they are being tended, healthy, and properly identified as belonging to the district (if being held by another entity).

An acceptable mortality or loss rate is not to exceed 10%. If that rate is exceeded, the district must alert SCC to explain the circumstances that led to that loss. It will be up to the discretion of SCC to assess damages, and SCC may determine that the district will not be eligible to hold plants unless factors leading to the mortality or loss rate are corrected.

If a district receives plants from a nursery that, upon arrival, are diseased and/or damaged, the district must notify SCC promptly if the nursery offers a refund or a replacement.

If the plants are held at a facility not owned by the district, there must be a written agreement in place prior to delivery of the plants from the procurement source establishing that the plants will be:

- Clearly marked as sold and belonging to the district.
- Set aside from other plants at the facility.
- Cared for until they are ready to be picked up by the district (or district-approved delegate) when ready to be used in restoration projects.

## **Seed Collection**

Districts collecting seeds should take measures to ensure that all seeds and/or cuttings are harvested sustainably and responsibly.

Districts must also follow these guidelines:

- Document seed sources: Maintain records including location (latitude/longitude), elevation, collection date, and name of the collector.
- Harvest sustainably: Minimize impact on existing vegetation and only collect from plants that are healthy and not at risk of endangerment or overharvesting.
- Follow permitting requirements: Follow all permitting requirements when necessary. Additionally, districts are encouraged to conduct tribal outreach in relevant collection areas.
- Ensure genetic diversity: Aim to collect seeds from a minimum of five collection sites at least a half mile to one mile apart. This may vary based on the unique conditions of each collection.

## **Timeline and Funding Process**

The RPPP cultivation grant cycle begins at the beginning of each fiscal year on July 1. A limited Request for Applications (RFA) will be released in May of each preceding fiscal year to support purchasing plants and maintenance of existing plants at holding sites, allowing funds to be awarded by July 1. A separate RFA will be released in July for all allowable project types listed under the cultivation section of these guidelines. Additional RFAs will be made available throughout each fiscal year until all the funds are allocated.

RFPs will be reviewed and approved by a committee comprised of SCC staff using the following evaluation criteria:

- The proposal explains in detail how funds will be used to support plant cultivation until the trees and/or shrubs are grown out for use in local riparian restoration projects.
- Geographic service area, including the number of organizations the proposed holding site will provide plants to.
- The district's expertise in plant cultivation.
- The district's long-term capacity to maintain plant cultivation for restoration projects.
- Priority will be given in the following order: maintenance of plants at existing sites, purchasing trees and/or shrubs, improvement of an existing holding site, creation of a new holding site, and activities related to plant propagation and/or collection of seeds.

Once the evaluation process is complete, applicants will be informed of their selection status. Activities funded must result in deliverables being procured, received, and/or implemented each fiscal year by June 30.

All successful applicants will be required to fill out a final activity report using a Formstack form. Elements in the report include: the number of plants and/or seeds ordered, plant survival rate, description of infrastructure improvement and/or creation, description of maintenance activities, and project information for plants distributed to restoration projects.

## **Plant Tracking**

Conservation districts are required to report the distribution of plants purchased through this program to riparian restoration projects. This may be done through the annual reporting form or through the optional Plant Tracking Form. The optional form is open year-round, allowing districts to log plant movement in real-time.

## 4. Restoration

### 4.1. Eligibility

#### Eligible Applicants

This section of the program is open to restoration groups implementing riparian restoration projects that support salmon recovery in the state of Washington. Restoration groups may include Washington conservation districts, fish enhancement groups, Tribes, counties, state or government agencies, and other non-profits.

#### Eligible Project Types

This program section matches native trees and shrubs to eligible groups for riparian habitat restoration. Applicants receive plants from SCC for riparian project implementation. Funding is not available under this portion of the program.

### 4.2. General Requirements

#### General Guidelines

Interested applicants may apply through RPPP's Plant Needs Form. This form gathers data from districts and other restoration groups on anticipated tree and/or shrub needs for riparian projects two or more years in the future.

Application elements include: a description of top priority projects, a timeline for receiving plants, and plant metrics: species, quantity, size and/or type, and preferred seed zone. Applicants are not required to have projects lined up and may provide an estimate of anticipated plants.

The application data is used to place orders with nurseries for two to three year contracted grows. By completing the form, applicants only express interest in receiving trees and shrubs for riparian habitat projects.

Form submission does not constitute placing orders or committing to receiving plants. Should SCC be able to accommodate the applicant's plant needs, the RPPP manager will reach out to confirm orders.

SCC cannot guarantee that an applicant's entire order can be confirmed. Applicants may rank their plant list with one being the top priority for their projects.

Applicants must have a designated space to receive plants, either for long-term holding or temporary storage prior to immediate project implementation.

## Timeline and Process

The RPPP Plant Needs Form is released each spring through a Formstack form. Applicants can expect to have orders confirmed in the following fall if able to be accommodated. Once the orders are confirmed, plants will be delivered two to three years in advance on the specified timeline coordinated between the RPPP manager and the applicant.

The following criteria will be used to determine plant orders:

- Priority will be given to conservation districts.
- Priority will also be given to applicants who have projects lined up.
- Plant ranking of requested plants.
- The applicants' ability to store plants before project implementation, either temporarily or long-term.

All successful applicants will be required to complete a plant receipt form within seven days of receiving a plant order from a nursery. Elements in the form will include confirmation of receiving a full plant order, plant health, and riparian project information.

Conservation districts that receive plant orders and plan on holding them at a cultivation site instead of immediate project implementation must notify SCC when those plants are distributed to projects. This can be done using the Plant Tracking Form.

## 5. Definitions

**Bareroots** are plants grown in the ground and harvested without soil or growing medium surrounding the roots.

**Climate-adapted species** are plant species that may be sourced from outside of the state of Washington, such as Oregon and California, to increase resilience and adaptability in response to anticipated climate change in local ecosystems.

**Competitive solicitation** is a formal procurement process in which Washington plant nurseries are invited to submit bids to propagate trees and/or shrubs. The goal is to award contracts to nurseries that align with the program's objectives while ensuring a fair and transparent process.

**Cultivation** is the process of growing previously propagated native trees and/or shrubs to a more developed size for two to three years until ready to be planted in riparian restoration projects.

**EPA Ecoregion Map** is a map produced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that breaks down the state of Washington into ecoregions to help guide the selection of seeds and/or cuttings that are best adapted to specific ecological conditions. Access GIS data and maps at: [EPA Ecoregion Download Files by State - Region 10 website](#).

**Geographic service area** is the range at which a conservation district can provide trees and/or shrubs for restoration projects. This may include counties, watersheds, ecoregions, and/or the number of partnering organizations receiving plants.

**Holding site** is a designated secure area where trees and/or shrubs are cultivated until final planting in restoration sites.

**Limited propagation** refers to conservation districts using grant funds for the germination of trees and/or shrubs by seeds and/or cuttings on a limited, case-by-case basis, which must be justified in the grant application.

**Live stakes** are the live cuttings of plant material without a previously developed root system.

**Native riparian trees and shrubs** are plants that have evolved and are naturally adapted to grow in riparian habitats within a particular geographical region. Please reference the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) [Trees and Shrubs for Riparian Plantings publication](#) for common native riparian trees and shrubs by region. This list is not comprehensive; species commonly used in local or site-specific restoration efforts may also be appropriate if they meet the above definition.

**Plugs** are plants grown in individual units (cells) using soil or a growing medium within modular trays and typically measured by cell size.

**Pots** are plants grown in containers using soil or a growing medium and typically measured in gallons.

**Propagation** is the process of germination and early development of trees and/or shrubs by seeds or cuttings from live plants.

**Riparian habitat** is an area of land that surrounds a river or stream and is home to a variety of plant and animal species adapted to wetland conditions. This program aims to restore riparian habitat that is specifically beneficial to salmon.



**Washington Tree Seed Transfer Zones** is a publication developed by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) that guides seed selection tailored to specific tree species and their suitable regions. Access the publication at: [https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/lm\\_wfn\\_seedzone\\_book.pdf](https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/lm_wfn_seedzone_book.pdf).

**WEBS (Washington's Electronic Business Solution)** is a procurement portal used by the state of Washington to post contract opportunities and facilitate the competitive solicitation process. Register for WEBS at: [pr-webs-vendor.des.wa.gov](https://pr-webs-vendor.des.wa.gov).