

## WHY LOCAL GENETICS?

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Evidence is mounting that plants from local genetics are better adapted to local environmental conditions; therefore they grow more vigorously and are more likely to reproduce and survive in the long run. It makes sense that the best plants for your project are the ones that have evolved to thrive in your region's climate and soils. Without local genetics, you stand to lose the celebrated advantages of using native plants—drought tolerance, disease resistance, and adaptation to local soils. So truly native plants are your best bet.

There is also evidence that local plants do a better job of feeding local animals and insects. For example, plants grown from seed collected in a colder climate may leaf out and bloom later than local plants do, thereby missing an opportunity to provide cover or food during a critical insect feeding period or bird migration stopover. Another reason for staying local is that non-local “native” plants can interbreed with local natives, and the resulting hybrids can have reduced vigor and lower survival rates.

It's no longer enough to say that a plant is native—you need to know what area it comes from: its genetic provenance. Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*) is native from Washington to Montana to Arizona but plants from any one of those states wouldn't be appropriate to plant in the other two.

You can't assume that native plants come from local genetics unless you ask the growers. Few nurseries do all of their own propagation and some nurseries do none at all—they buy full-grown or starter stock from other growers. Ask nursery owners about the provenance of the native plants you buy. They should at least be able to vouch for their state of origin. If they can't identify the county or region of origin, ask them to keep track of it in the future. This information could be critical to the success of your project.

Sound Native Plants proudly proclaims that all our plants come from western Washington genetic stock. All of the seed and propagation material that we collect comes from Thurston or surrounding counties. When we order material in from other sources we specify that it must be from the Puget Sound area with 1000' of elevation or less. If our suppliers cannot provide the genetic provenance of their material, we unfortunately cannot carry it. It is very important to us to provide the best quality plants and knowing the genetic provenance is one way we continue to supply the most appropriate plants for your projects.