

Native Shrubs Released by Aberdeen Plant Materials Center

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, Plant Materials Center at Aberdeen Idaho in cooperation with the Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station has recently released several native shrubs for restoring rangeland in the intermountain west. Certified seed is being made available to commercial seed growers to increase seed quantity for anticipated large-scale plantings on rangeland devastated by wild fire or other disturbances. These shrubs would be a component in a seed mixture of grasses and wild flowers.

In cooperation with the Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station and the Pullman, Washington Plant Materials Center, the Aberdeen Center released Snake River Plains Germplasm fourwing saltbush in 2001 for use in the intermountain west. Fourwing saltbush is an upright shrub that provides erosion control, and browse for livestock and big game and is common on dry, moderately saline or alkaline rangeland.

Snake River Plains Germplasm is composed of four collections that were tested along with 79 other collections at the Aberdeen Plant Materials Center from 1977 to 1986. These four collections had very good tolerance to cold temperatures. Seed from the four original collections were then evaluated from 1995 to 2000 at off-center test sites in Idaho, Oregon, Utah and Washington. Snake River Plains Germplasm has performed very well and shows promise in comparison to other sources of fourwing saltbush.

The second native shrub released in cooperation with the Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station during 2001 is Northern Cold Desert Germplasm winterfat. Winterfat is a native shrub that also provides erosion control, and browse for livestock and big game in arid to semi-arid and moderately saline or alkaline rangeland areas.

Northern Cold Desert Germplasm is composed of five collections of winterfat that were tested along with 40 other collections at the Plant Materials Center from 1978 to 1986. The five collections had very good tolerance to cold temperatures. Seed from the original collections were also evaluated from 1995 to 2000 at off-center test sites in Idaho and Utah.

In October, 2001 the Aberdeen Plant Materials Center harvested the first Certified seed of these 2 shrub selections. The seed was cleaned, tested, and made available to seed growers through the University of Idaho Foundation Seed Stocks Program and the Utah Crop Improvement Association. For further information, contact the Aberdeen Plant Materials Center at (208) 397-4133.

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