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Commercial sources of native seeds and plants are needed for resource conservation programs, and ecosystem restoration projects. The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), through its network of plant materials centers and plant materials specialists, makes cultivar and prevarietal releases of native plant species available for commercial production for resource conservation and environmental programs, and ecosystem restoration throughout the U.S. Plants designated as “cultivar” undergo selection, extensive evaluations and performance testing under field conditions before they are made available to growers for commercial production. Prevarietal release is a process whereby a plant (individual, group, or whole population) from a specific region or location is identified, increased, and certified for commercial production with less intensive evaluation and testing compared to plants designated as cultivar. Prevarietal releases are categorized as either “source-identified”, “selected”, or “tested” class according to the amount and intensity of evaluation work. This process is beneficial for fulfilling a demand for local and regional sources of native plants, where none to minimal or moderate field testing is needed on plant performance and adaptation. Certification of seed, seedlings or cuttings of prevarietal releases, through state crop improvement associations, helps ensure the quality (e.g. purity, germination) and proper identity (e.g. genetic origin, integrity) of the commercial seed lot or other material. For more information on plant science technology developed by the USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Program visit our website at <http://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/>.

Plant Release Types for Ecosystem Restoration