

Minutes – WERA-1013
Montana State University
Bozeman, MT
Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Meeting conducted by Heidi Kratsch, Chair
Meeting brought to order — 8:00 AM

Introductions: participants from universities and industry

Heidi Kratsch provided an overview of committee development, history, function, and objectives.

Discussion emerged concerning the definition of “native plant” as it impacts this committee. No attempt was made to develop a solid definition: comments were made that the definition is dependent on end use (reclamation or landscape), but that plants referred to as native should be derived regionally and adapted to local conditions.

Membership composition was discussed. Heidi Kratsch indicated that membership and/or involvement is encouraged from both public institutions and industry representatives within the Intermountain West, but no limitations are in place and all interested parties are encouraged to become official members.

A project “go-around” was held to educate about members’ current work projects.

Heidi Kratsch has a native plant trialing project with seven species being evaluated. Several collections from diverse populations of each species have been collected and are currently being tested in multiple locations (four sites, including southern Utah) for adaptation. Species: *Agastache urticifolia*, *Cercocarpus ledifolius*, *Geranium viscosissimum*, *Monardella odoratissima*, *Penstemon eatonii*, *Peraphyllum ramossissimum*, *Purshia mexicana*, *Stanleya pinnata*.

Tracy Dougher works in Montana on native and adapted grasses for turfgrass use. She has used line source irrigation to evaluate species for water requirements. Tracy is also looking at sod quality (sod strength, root mass, etc.) of native and adapted grasses.

Bob Gorman is working on a southeast Alaska project to propagate and enhance propagation of native plants and has developed fact sheets for propagating native species. He works in a very high-precipitation area near Sitka and works closely with local Native Americans to identify suitable species for research.

Stephen Love works on a three-year-old Idaho project on domesticating native plants and is currently working with over 600 species of penstemons, buckwheats, asters, daisies, mints, columbines, and assorted shrubs and trees. He evaluates species for adaptation and landscape potential.

Karen Panter works in Wyoming and indicated she is in the infancy stage on a native plant evaluation research project. She is working some on paintbrush, with minimal success; also working on some medicinal species. Karen is getting state support for public education on native plants.

Jim Klett works with Colorado's Plant Select® program, which is now 12 years old and has just become a 501(c) non-profit organization. They hired an executive director and are trying to strengthen both marketing and research components of the program. The Plant Select® program has a five-site woody-plant evaluation project and also coordinates about 80 demonstration gardens over several states in the intermountain west. They are working to establish water requirements for native shrubs.

Genhua Niu works in the desert community of El Paso, Texas and is interested in water conservation in gardens and landscapes. She does research to identify and evaluate drought tolerant landscape species. Genhua also does water-use and salt-tolerance studies on many ornamental (not necessarily native) species.

Robert Dunn and Laura Smith operate a Belgrade, Montana wholesale landscape nursery and concentrate a large proportion of their operation in native plants, especially shrubs. They also work in reclamation for both public and private entities. In addition, Robert and Laura are involved in collecting, evaluating, and producing new plants. They urged researchers to investigate pre-emergent weed control in natives.

Mikel Stevens works at Brigham Young University in Utah. He recently initiated a project to increase horticultural value of native species by producing and selecting polyploids. Mikel is interested in improving flowering period, reducing weediness, and creating dwarfism. He is currently collecting penstemon species (over 200) as a model genus for this work and is also studying the genetic variability and genomics of penstemon.

Larry Rupp is working at Utah State University specifically on bigtooth maple and making local selections for better fall color. He is doing research on propagation using layering. Larry is using satellite and aerial imagery to identify plant specimens in the wild with good form and fall color. Superior plants were recently chip budded into an evaluation nursery.

Merrill Johnson operates a native plant nursery in Holden, Utah and currently serves on the board of the Intermountain Native Plant Growers Association. He collects and propagates native plants on a wholesale level. Merrill is interested in working with public researchers to increase plant availability and generate knowledge on propagating and growing native plants.

Bill Graves works in Iowa on native plants, including species from the southeastern United States. He has found many of these to be adapted to the colder climate of Iowa; his focus is currently on Acer, Styax, Alnus, Rhamnus, Leitneria, Callicarpa, Dirca, and Nyssa.

**Suggestion made to share evaluation forms and evaluation criteria. Assignments were made to have all participants contribute this information. The forms are to be sent to Heidi Kratsch.

Subcommittee Reports:

Proposal Writing – H. Kratsch, T. Dougher, K. Panter

Education – J. Klett, S. Love, K. Panter

Website – H. Kratsch, S. Love, T. Dougher, G. Niu, B. Gorman

Proposal Writing Committee: Work completed, committee officially dissolved.

**Education Committee: Proposed to utilize committee members to establish a speaker's bureau for state horticulture conferences. Speaker volunteers were recruited.

Heidi Kratsch Genhua Niu

Tracy Dougher Larry Rupp

Beth MacFawn Bill Graves

Jim Klett Karen Panter

Stephen Love

**Committee needs dates for all state conferences. Send to Heidi Kratsch.

Some discussion was had on spearheading the development of conference and educational opportunities for landscape architects and designers interested in using native plants. The possibility of partnering with landscape organizations in this effort was discussed.

Industry Representatives expressed the need for plant availability lists for designers and installers. They urged the committee to help facilitate the distribution of this kind of information.

**Karen Panter volunteered to put together an abstract for oral/poster presentation at ASHS for our committee.

Website Committee: Has yet to meet. Suggestions were made to the committee to construct the website such that it provides exposure for native plant growers and landscapers.

**A new committee was proposed to explore partnerships for organizing an ongoing "Landscaping with Native Plants" conference and developing other information outlets.

Committee: Heidi Kratsch, Jim Klett, Beth MacFawn, Laura Smith

Options for partners – national and state landscape associations, regional university collaboration groups (e.g., Western Rural Development Center).

Discussion of Benchmarks

Plant Evaluation Tasks – Discussion was had about the process of developing a standard plant evaluation system, including the development of written protocols. A benchmark would be a functioning evaluation system. An earlier benchmark would be the establishment of protocols. A later benchmark would be publication of evaluation data. Concern was expressed about having evaluation objectives that were too broad. The consensus was that this was unavoidable because of the nature of the proposed research.

**A committee was organized to develop an evaluation protocol:
Tracy Dougher, Jim Klett, Mikel Stevens, Genhua Niu, Heidi Kratsch

Website – A benchmark would be to have an operational website.

Education – One identifiable benchmark will be to have a WERA-1013 member participate in state native plant conferences (three or more). Another benchmark is to develop partnerships to organize and sustain educational conferences, specifically to educate landscape designers.

Industry Forum

– Suggestion was made to have the WERA-1013 group develop a list of approved plants. It could be a product of the evaluation/testing process.

- Include ecological information on plant species on website
- How to incorporate native plants into a landscape
- Stressed need for more woody species, also dry shade species
- Need “research updates” on website and presented at conferences

Considerable discussion was had on helping industry deal with the lack of match between demand and supply. The committee may be able to help via education.

Election of Officers – Two-Year Term:

Stephen Love – Chair
Tracy Dougher – Secretary

Next Meetings:

2009 – possibly October, University of Wyoming
2010 - University of Idaho

Participants

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