

NORFOLK SEED STRATEGY



for Conservation, Habitat Creation & Healthy Landscape Planning



Saving wildlife begins with native plant seeds, the source of healthy landscapes.

The **Norfolk Seed Strategy** aims to increase the diversity and availability of native plants and seeds available for creating and restoring healthy landscapes. How?

- Focusing on informed and sustainable collection, dispersal and banking of native plant seeds in order to benefit fragmented, remnant populations.
- Collaborating to identify opportunities to save and increase seed resources, based on conservation priorities and project objectives, as well as, existing resources and future demand for native plants and seeds.
- Guiding coordinated implementation across sectors, and with multiple partners from supply to demand.



Partners

This initiative is part of a broader **Carolinian Canada Big Picture** collective effort to reverse the trend of habitat loss in the Carolinian Zone through targeted investment and action. The Seed Strategy will provide a strong ecological foundation for **Habitat Investment Pilot** projects and **In the Zone** garden program. The Middlesex Pilot is guided by a **Healthy Landscape Strategy** co-developed with Chippewas of the Thames First Nation and other local First Nations, conservation authorities, municipalities, land trusts, agriculture and business groups.

The **Ontario Plant Restoration Alliance (OPRA)** works to enhance populations of uncommon native plants by salvaging seed from fragmented habitats, and establishing ‘*ex situ*’ conservation gardens to serve as living seed libraries. OPRA will help to facilitate the development of the Middlesex Seed Strategy, and help identify priority species. With experience in wild-sourcing and propagating seed from over 300 species of native plants, OPRA partners can also provide technical advice on seed collection, and propagation if necessary

Focus on local, ethical seed sources for high quality habitat

Seed may be grown for strategic healthy landscape goals including:

- New natural habitat for healthy ecosystems and connectivity,
- Increasing the functionality and impact of infrastructure projects, or
- Grown and formatted specifically for landscape design and retail sales to improve health of gardens and neighbourhoods.

Seeds may be grown to meet a variety of ecological restoration goals. To scale-up high quality seeds, the strategy will aim to establish 'ex situ' populations, away from the parent plants in a maintained space, such as a garden or agricultural field. These seed conservation orchards are living libraries and gene banks to help conserve unique local flora.

Benefits of ex situ plant conservation

- Increasing capacity for future work,
- Banking genes from threatened populations,
- Increasing gene flow between fragmented populations by mimicking migration.
- Reducing impacts of future collection on wild populations

A Seed Strategy can guide the increase of ecologically appropriate plants for habitat creation, while supporting local growers. It can also address specific plant or wildlife species conservation goals, climate adaptation and reduce ecological restoration costs over time. Conservation gardens for some species could be scaled-up agriculturally to produce bulk wildflower and grass seed for large restoration projects.

Seed collection, handling and propagation methods are species specific, but can be easy to learn! In order to limit our impact on existing seed resources, all wild seed collection must be done strategically to meet specific project goals, and in most cases, conduction by, or overseen by a trained expert. Many of the iconic prairie species are uncommon on the landscape, and so growing source-identified seed from a native plant producer may be a more effective way of meeting project goals. However, establishing ex situ populations for future use means that the impact is reduced to a single collection from the wild.

Opportunities to Grow Together

Developing a Seed Strategy for Norfolk County requires collaboration between several key partners. Participants may include:

- **Public and Private Landowners** who may have wild seed sources, restoration needs, or opportunities to house seed orchards.
- **Ecologists and Plant Conservation Experts** who may have species-specific conservation goals, and could provide guidance on seed collection, propagation or restoration.
- **Growers and Farmers** who may have an interest in the commercial production of local native plants and/or seeds to meet demands.
- **Retailers, Landscape Designers and Home Gardeners** who are looking to use more native plants, and access them locally, or support small seed orchards.
- **Schools, Community, Volunteer and Environmental Groups** who want to save wildlife and grow a healthy community or steward small seed orchards.

Seed a Movement

To get started, we invite you to take a survey to scope out first steps:

1) **Seed / Native Plant demand** –

- a. What are your native plant goals and needs? What are the opportunities to reverse the trend of habitat loss? Are there barriers for scaling-up over time?
- b. Do you have priority species, based on conservation or habitat restoration needs?
- c. Would any of your projects benefit from propagation of local seed?

2) **Seed / Native Plant supply** –

- a. Do you have access to potential seed collection sites-- restored, or wild?
- b. Are you an experienced seed collector? Are you a novice interested in learning more? Do you have a team of volunteers interested in seed collection, or planting?
- c. Are you interested in growing native plants from seed? Do you have growing space for seedling propagation? Cold, dry storage space for seeds?
- d. Are you interested in hosting an ex situ conservation garden? Are you interested in scaling up local prairie, and grassland species for bulk seed production?

3) **Coordinated action** –

- a. Are you interested in participating in the coordination of seed sourcing, collection, and propagation? Are you interested in monitoring wild seed resources?
- b. Are there opportunities to invest in native seed production as a Green Business?
- c. Are there local opportunities to research native plants, habitats, and restoration?
- d. Would assistance with species selection or restoration methods be helpful for your project goals?