

Native Seeds and Wildlife



Native plants are foundational to the food webs upon which wildlife depend. Ensuring pollinators and other native wildlife thrive will require a sufficient supply of native seeds for conservation and restoration.

Healthy native plant populations can restore ecosystem productivity and enhance resilience. Returning native vegetation to areas impacted by wildfire, extreme weather, or mining requires native seeds and nursery stock. However, like wildlife, they face threats related to land use change, invasive species and severe weather – and supply isn't great enough to meet the need.

Fifty-two of the National Wildlife Federation's state and territorial affiliates [passed a resolution](#) designating native plants and seeds as a key policy priority for the Federation in its work to ensure wildlife thrive.



PHOTO: Sally Stone

Native American Seeds Act

The **Native American Seeds Act** would establish a program at the Department of Interior to partner with Tribes to safeguard traditional seeds and farming methods. These seeds are critical to the cultural heritage and food security of Tribal members, and preserving them would also help protect the biodiversity of the local environment.

National Interagency Seed & Restoration Center Establishment Act

This legislation would codify a National Interagency Seed and Restoration Center at the Department of Interior to coordinate efforts across multiple agencies to conserve and restore native plant populations throughout the United States.

This bill would also establish regional hubs tasked with assessing the need for native seeds in different ecosystems. The hubs would conduct research and propagate and/or store native seeds to be available for restoration projects. As we face increased extreme weather events, having ready access to native seeds to execute restoration and rehabilitation projects is more crucial than ever.

PHOTO: Alfred Nims



Native Seeds and the Recovering America's Wildlife Act

The bipartisan **Recovering America's Wildlife Act** (RAWA) would provide critical funding for states, Tribes and territories to implement in on-the-ground conservation efforts that help prevent fish, wildlife and plants from becoming endangered, and to support the recovery of species already at risk. RAWA would strengthen healthy wildlife populations and resilient ecosystems by enabling state wildlife agencies to fully implement their State Wildlife Action Plans. These plans identify species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) and outline strategies to conserve them and the habitats they depend on. Importantly, RAWA would increase funding for plant conservation by providing additional resources to states that include plants on their SGCN lists. The bill would also provide dedicated funding to federally recognized Tribal nations for conservation initiatives, including the restoration and protection of native plants, insects, and invertebrates on Tribal lands.

Native Seeds and the Farm Bill

The **Farm Bill** is a multiyear legislative package that supports farmers, ranchers, and landowners throughout the United States. In addition to providing supports for our food system, the Farm Bill is the largest federal investment in conservation. The Farm Bill provides millions of dollars in funding for voluntary conservation practices that protect and restore private and Tribal lands. Over 40% of lands in the U.S. are privately owned, making private and Tribal landowners a key ally in supporting wildlife and their habitat. The 2018 Farm Bill recommends the use of native plants for agriculture conservation programs, but there is not adequate supply of those plants. Prioritizing the use of native plants and increasing native seed supplies will help meet this need for native plants and improve the effectiveness of USDA conservation programs.

Native Seeds and the North American Grasslands Conservation Act

America's grasslands are one of the most imperiled ecosystems with more than 70% of the tallgrass, mixed and shortgrass prairies disappearing. The **North American Grasslands Conservation Act** would counteract this decline through landowner-driven, voluntary, and incentive-based measures to protect and restore grasslands in the United States. Grassland ecosystems are in great need for ecologically appropriate ecosystem restoration and native seeds will play an important part ensuring these landscapes can support healthy and resilient plant and wildlife populations. The Act would support grassland conservation measures on Tribal lands as well.



PHOTO: Jennifer Leigh Warner

The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines **native plants** as “a plant that is a part of the balance of nature that has developed over hundreds or thousands of years in a particular region or ecosystem.” Native plants are already well adapted to the growing conditions where they occur, and wildlife have evolved to depend on those native plants. A reliable supply of native seeds ensures habitat restoration measures can be effective and ecologically appropriate.