



PLANT SPECIES INVENTORIES

PROMOTING NATIVE HABITATS AT YOUR FACILITY

Do you want to know how to ensure that you are managing for a native plant community while benefitting the native wildlife that depend on it?

It's simple - regularly survey the vegetation in each habitat on your site.

Regularly conducting a plant species inventory in your habitat(s) not only allows you to identify changes in the plant community, but it is also a necessary component in meeting the “locally appropriate” requirement for your WHC Conservation Certification® projects. At minimum, your inventory should be:



Dated



Conducted every 2-3 years



Include whether or not each species is native to your location



Include common and scientific names of each species observed

An ongoing inventory of vegetation is an excellent way to record the effects your enhancement efforts are having on your site's habitat(s). The inventory process may seem daunting at first, but with experience your team will find themselves identifying plants with ease, prepared to manage efforts that will increase your site's biodiversity. Inventorying your habitat's plants also gives your site an opportunity to partner with outside groups, such as local chapters of native plant societies, while your team becomes increasingly familiar with plant identification.

PLANT SPECIES INVENTORY BASICS

The first step to conducting a new plant inventory for each habitat is simple, and is just that – a step. Walk through the habitat and write down which species you see growing, including both native and nonnative/invasive species. Try to identify as many species as possible as your inventory should provide a representative snapshot of the plant community in each habitat.

If you have a plant inventory from a previous year, the easiest way to update it is to use it as a checklist, noting which species are still present. If you observe additional/new species, record those as well.

By regularly maintaining each habitat's inventory, your team can identify if new, invasive species have entered the site, enabling you to take corrective action.



BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Maintain a schedule and protocol for conducting your inventories
- For habitats larger than one acre, work in small groups of 2-3 to cover more area
- If the entire habitat is too large to cover, utilize sampling techniques such as line transects or sample plots
- Use previous planting/seed lists as a good starting point
- Photograph any unknown plants for later identification
- Bring necessary supplies: e.g., aerial map, field guides, plant ID apps, camera/phone, sunscreen and water

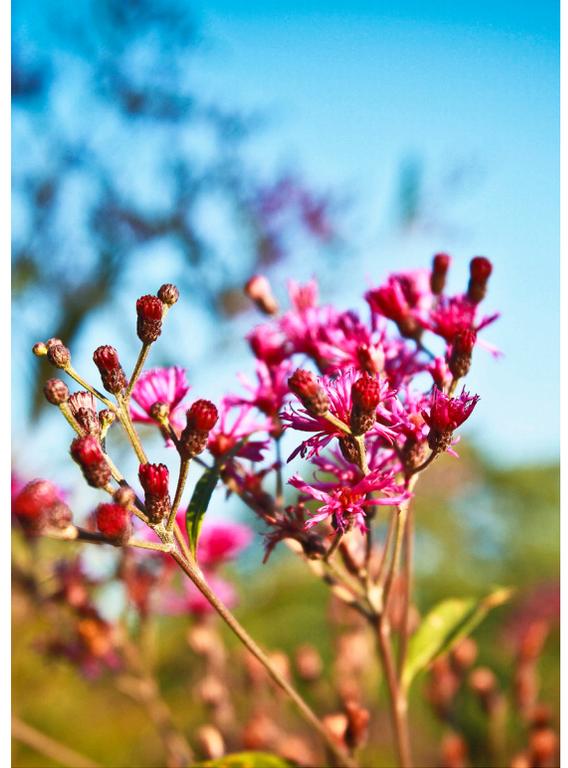
RESOURCES

Websites

- ▶ [Plants.usda.gov](https://plants.usda.gov)
- ▶ [Wildflower.org](https://wildflower.org)
- ▶ [NatureServe.org](https://natureserve.org)

Mobile Apps

- ▶ LeafSnap
- ▶ Flower Checker
- ▶ iNaturalist



SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

When it is not possible to survey the complete habitat for the inventory, use samples to identify common plant species that can model the community structure of the whole habitat.

Option 1: Line Transect

The line transect method places lines randomly across your study site to help you identify and record the species that your lines intercept. The transect length, distance between transects, and number of transects per acre are arbitrary. To ensure accurate results, keep these three variables constant for all areas sampled.

Option 2: Sample Plots

The sample plot method consists of designating circular, square or rectangular sample areas using tape, string, PVC pipes or hula hoops and identifying and recording all the species within each plot. Plots can be randomly or systematically placed. Sizes of plots vary depending on the size of the site, but good possible sizes are:

- ▶ 33 feet by 33 feet to 150 feet (up to ½ acre) for trees
- ▶ 15 feet by 15 feet to 40 feet for woody undergrowth up to 10 feet in height
- ▶ 3 feet by 3 feet to 20 feet for herbaceous vegetation

The number of plots sampled should be determined by wildlife team members based on factors such as the time available for sampling. The more sample plots studied, the more comprehensive the habitat inventory will be.

