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## Natives - Know the Lingo

Like any industry or professional discipline, those of us in the in ecological restoration business are guilty of lapsing into lingo. Here are a few terms you might hear thrown around in the business or might run across in specifications.

### Bare-root

A live plant without a container (pot). Roots may or may not have clinging potting media, or soil. Bare-root plants are usually nursery-grown and field-dug. However, it is always a good idea to verify that they have not been wild-harvested. The practice of wild-harvesting live-plants may damage our precious natural areas.

### B&B

Stands for “Balled and Burlapped,” trees that are field-grown and sold with their root balls wrapped in burlap.

### Cold Stratification

A cold treatment mimicking what seed in the wild experiences when exposed to prolonged winter temperatures. Following cold stratification, the seed is programmed to begin growing during the next warm period. Cultivated native seed is often stored in temperature-controlled environments and needs some form of artificial cold-stratification to begin growing. There are various forms of stratification, the primary purpose is to promote ready, more uniform germination.

### Containerized

Live plants, shrubs and trees that are sold in containers or pots. Sizes are described using volume measures such as quart and gallon, or dimensions such as 2” (two-inch) and 1”. A “gallon” container may not be exactly one gallon. Legislation has tighten labeling rules describing container sizes, so you may see what was formerly called a “one-gallon” referred to as a “trade gallon” or “#1”. It is a good idea to ask for pot dimensions in terms of total volume, since many specifications in the native business call for 2” pots, but growers may define pots as 2” in width or depth which can be very different in actual overall size.

### Cultivar

A plant selected and grown for certain desirable traits. These characteristics are usually appearance-related, such as height, bloom color, size, etc. These do not support genetic diversity and are not representative of the wild-plant population, even if they began as wild native plants (and most cultivars don't). Many cultivars lack ample nectar or pollen to feed butterflies and bees, or they may be nutritionally sterile. Cultivars are given a descriptive name in addition to their botanical name; for example, one cultivar of *Schizachyrium scoparium* (Little bluestem) is known as “The Blues”.

### Certified Seed

This term is most often used in the traditional agriculture and turf grass industry. It refers to seed grown in government-certified fields, tested by their labs, and given certified seed tags. This seed is certified by state or federally designated agencies to be true to name, through a series of records, and field and crop inspections. The process does not apply well to wild-type products because the certification process tends to focus on narrow species traits. Few states have native seed certification programs. Certified seed is sometimes referred to as “yellow tag” seed because state-certified seeds are tagged with official yellow tags. If federally certified, seed will bear an official blue tag. Native seed is rarely federally certified.

### Fluff / De-fluffed (also De-awned)

Describes whether or not seed still has its seed dispersal mechanism ( for example, the umbrella on a Dandelion). The common Dandelion (which is non-native) with its umbrella would be described as “fluff”; with the umbrella removed it would be described as “de-fluffed.”

### Flowable

Describes seed that has been processed to the point of becoming flowable. Seeds that have been de-fluffed and de-hulled move more quickly and easily through mechanical seeders. In some cases flowable is helpful, in other cases flowable is a hindrance.

### Forbs

Any herbaceous (non-woody) plant that is not a grass-like species (like grasses, sedges and rushes), or bryophytes, or ferns and fern allies. Forbs usually often have obvious flowers.

G-0 (Generation Zero): In the true native grower industry, G-0 is the wild-collected generation. G-1 (Generation 1) is the first generation grown under cultivation. G-2 is the second generation grown under cultivation, and so forth. Because unintentional selection occurs in cultivation, both wild-type growers and breeders of cultivars are interested in the concept of generations. The further out from the original population, the less similar the product will be to the original parent generation. You may sometimes hear the term “parent-stock” used to loosely express this concept.

### Hull / De-hulled

Describes whether seed has its seed-dispersal mechanism and outer covering removed. A great example is “stick-tights.” The common stick-tight with its Velcro-like coat could be described as “with hull,” with the covering removed it would be described as “de-hulled.” De-hulled can also refer to the removal of protective seed coats, which damages seed shelf-life and viability. When buying de-hulled seed, be sure to ask for the grower’s definition.

### Inflorescence

The flower cluster.

### Inoculants

In the native-seed business, this usually refers to rhizobium bacterial inoculants that are often included with legume seeds. They are commonly provided in a powder or granular form, and are used to facilitate the formation of legume root nodules. The bacteria is naturally occurring, but may be greatly reduced or absent in highly disturbed and degraded soils.

### Local ecotype

A population within a species that has a specific genetic makeup naturally adapted to a specific region. This term is generally used to more narrowly define the term “native” within a closely-defined region. It means the genotype is indigenous to the area. While a plant from the Texas Panhandle and another from Northeastern Minnesota may be the exact same species, each genotype is drastically different in terms of acclimatization (rainfall, temperature range, atmosphere/altitude, diseases, pests, predation, etc.).

### Native

A broad term used to describe a species that occurs naturally within a specific geo-political region. In North America, this is generally defined as having grown in the region before European settlement. Some states, like Wisconsin, have attempted to legally define the term for purposes of seed labeling. Pending rules in Wisconsin state that only plants listed in DNR Technical Bulletin No. 192 can be labeled “native.”

### “Nativar”

This is a trademarked term that is leaking into common usage in the plant industry to describe cultivated natives (much like “Band-aid” or “Kleenex” in their respective industries). People who use it are often referring to natives which have been bred or selected for certain characteristics. They may or may not be wild-type, and are frequently garden center varieties of native plants.

### No-till Drill / Slit Seeder (“Truax”)

A specialty seeder used to drill (plant) seed without the requirement of tilling the soil. Truax is a long-time manufacturer of no-till drills; therefore, some industry insiders use the term “Truax” to refer to all no-till drills.

### Origin

In standard nursery terminology, this refers to the source of the seed or plant species. The origin may mean either where it came from or where it was grown. An origin of “Polk County Wisconsin” could mean the plants were grown in Polk County from seed wild collected in Florida, or it could mean its wild origin was Polk County. It is important to ask the grower how they define origin. Origin does not necessarily have any relation to “native” or “local.” Our nurseries, and many producers of wild-type natives use the term to refer to a species’ genetic origin, the location of its original wild population, a.k.a., “G-0” or “Generation Zero.” Some states and municipalities have legal definitions of the term “origin.”

### PLS (Percent Live Seed)

This is a measurement system used to express the amount of viable seed within the quantity. “90% PLS” indicates 90% of the product by weight is viable seed. Not all seed suppliers conduct PLS tests because of the added expense, and because there are few standardized testing protocols for natives. As a buyer, requiring PLS testing usually increases the price, and reduces the diversity of seed available. But it does offer some peace of mind for the producer and customer alike.

### Plug and Pot

A small live plant with root mass. These are usually grown in multi-celled trays. Plug and Pot sizes are usually described by a number; 32 (equivalent to a 2-1/2" Pot), 38, 48, 50, 72, and 128 are common. These numbers indicate how many cells there are in a tray, which is approximately 10"x20" in size. Therefore, the larger the plug number, the smaller the plug size.

Root-pruned: The cutting or killing of some roots to promote branching out and additional growth of roots.

### Graminoid

Grasses and grass-like plants like sedges and rushes

### Seed-bank

All viable seed contained within the soil.

### Top-growth

The part of the plant above ground.

### Wild-dug

Plants collected from the wild rather than nursery produced.

### Wild-gathered

Seed collected from the wild rather than seed propagated from wild-gathered parent stock.

### Wild-type

Native plants and seeds which have not been intentionally bred or culled to select or de-select naturally occurring traits. Wild-types are highly similar in genetic diversity and character to wild populations.

### Yellow-tag

State certified seed, bearing an official yellow tag (see Certified)

This is by no means a complete list, and the terms defined here are not meant as industry standard definitions. Nor do they necessarily reflect the legal definitions in your region. Some states and municipalities have legal definitions of terms like "origin" and "native". We have defined the terms based on our experience with their common usage in the industry.

# Session Notes

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