RIPARIAN PLANTING GUIDE FOR HILL COUNTRY LANDOWNERS

This Hill Country Alliance resource has two sections. The first section provides an overview of the planting methods used along Hill Country creeks and rivers; key considerations as well as a few appropriate riparian species are listed for each technique. The second section explains where to obtain native plant materials; this is not an exhaustive list.

Section 1: Planting Methods

A. Cuttings (e.g. Black Willow, Sycamore, Button Bush, Box Elder)
   - Best time to cut and plant cuttings is in late winter or early spring (during dormancy)
   - Use young branches (e.g. around the size of a thumb, should not have thick bark), that are several feet in length, for cuttings.
   - Remove side branches off cuttings and plant cutting where there is shallow groundwater
   - Don’t remove more than a third of the branches from a particular bush or tree when sourcing material
   - Consider soaking the cutting before planting
   - Plant cuttings at least 1.5 – 2.0 feet in the ground, so they can withstand spring flows and make sure there’s good soil contact around the cutting once it’s punched in the ground
   - Beaver and deer can severely damage plantings, so be prepared for heavy losses. Planting cuttings in protected niches will improve success; also control deer population.

B. Transplants (e.g. Switchgrass, Eastern gamagrass, Emory sedge, Spikerush)
   - Best time to transplant is fall and winter (avoid summer when plants likely water stressed)
   - Find a healthy stand and cut down into the soil with a sharpshooter shovel or sturdy gardening trowel to remove a plug from the edge of the plant.
   - Try to keep as much of the root material intact as possible.
   - If a large clump can be removed, use a sharpshooter, hatchet, or bread knife to divide into smaller clumps
   - Fill the hole formed at the source plant with nearby soil and leaf litter.
- Water the transplants when first planted; if feasible, consider additional watering during the first year of establishment, especially during dry spells.
- Some people like to soak transplants with water and a product called “Super Thrive” (available at most plant nurseries) before putting in the ground to help with root growth.
- Obligate wetland species (e.g. sedge and spikerush) should be planted at or near the waterline. Facultative species (e.g. switchgrass and gamagrass) can be planted at the waterline or on higher sites; in higher sites, they must be initially watered. Note, these terms are explained on page 18 of Your Remarkable Riparian Field Guide.
- Spacing of transplanted plantings can be 1 to 3 feet apart.
- Livestock, white-tailed deer and exotics may severely reduce successful establishment of transplants. Consider protecting transplants by piling tree limbs around a cluster of plantings or “planting” sticks around individual transplants as vertical fencing.

C. **Broadcast Seeding (e.g. Switchgrass, Eastern gamagrass, or seed mixes)**
- When seeding, the most important consideration is ensuring that there is good contact between the seed and the soil; for some sites, this may require roughing up the soil (e.g. with a heavy rake, pick, or shovel), then smoothing out the soil a bit, casting the seed, then packing the seed down to ensure good contact with soil.
- Depending on the site and scale of seeding, packing the seed down can be done by scuffing a boot heal over the area, sweeping a tree branch, or applying mechanical equipment (e.g. no-till drill seeder, cultipacker) to mix seed into the soil.
- Seed may be purchased from several regional sources or harvested from the field (however self-collected seed is of unknown quality and may or may not be viable).
- Harvesting from the field should only be done by people able to identify species well (i.e. to distinguish from and avoid non-native, invasive species) as well as to determine when seed is ready for harvest.
- Toss seed as if you are feeding grain to chickens (i.e. casting and spreading, not clumping). Use of cyclone type seeder will greatly improve seed distribution and efficiency of planting. Strive for a seeding rate of 25 to 50 seed per square foot.
Section II: Places to Purchase Plant Materials (not exhaustive):

The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center’s website offers a National Suppliers Directory where you can search for nearby commercial businesses. See https://www.wildflower.org/suppliers/

A. Regional Sources of Native Seed:
- Native American Seed in Junction, TX (http://www.seedsource.com/catalog/)
- Douglass King Seed in San Antonio, TX (https://www.dkseeds.com/), or
- Turner Seed in Breckenridge, TX (https://www.turnerseed.com/home.html).
- Bamert Seed Company in Muleshoe, TX (https://bamertseed.com/)

B. Regional Sources of Containerized Stock:
There are many businesses, agencies, and non-profit organizations that sell native riparian plants, including:
- McNeal Growers in Cedar Creek, TX (http://mcnealgrowers.com/)
- Madrone Nursery in San Marcos, TX (http://mcnealgrowers.com/contact.html)
- Friendly Natives in Fredericksburg, TX (http://www.friendlynatives.com/)
- Medina Garden Nursery in Medina, TX (www.medinagardennursery.com/)
- Numerous entities such as local chapters of the Native Plant Society of Texas and Master Gardeners, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, and Texas A&M Forest Service West Texas Nursery have annual plant sales.

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