



Farm Service Agency

Celebrating 25 Years of the Conservation Reserve Program

CRP — On the Ground

CREP Project

Saves Streams
Walla Walla Co.



Grass Filter Strip

Protects Peone
Creek,
Spokane Co.



CRP Creates

Wildlife Park
Spokane Co.



CRP Provides

Farm Balance
Whitman Co.

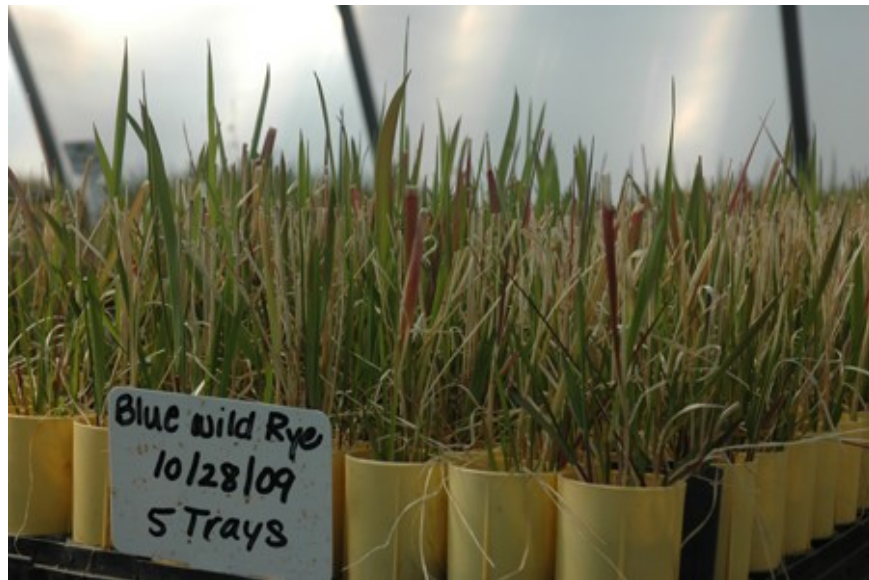


CREP Preserves

Family Lifestyle in
Whatcom Co.



Business Grows
with CRP in
Whitman Co.



Grass starts—Photo by Patrick Lewis

Business Grows with CRP

When the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) started 25 years ago, Plants of the Wild Nursery barely existed on the landscape of Eastern Washington. Now, the native-plant nursery sells seeds and plants throughout the Western United States. Palouse Seed Company started Plants of the Wild Nursery in 1979 in Tekoa, Washington, just south of Spokane. As CRP grew, business at Plants of the Wild Nursery took off.

Initially, plants for CRP made up most of the nursery's market. Most of the plants were not native but the variety and number of native options grew as the company expanded. Seeds, Inc. – a corporation owned by area farmers - purchased Palouse Seed Company in 1990 and provided capital for expansion. The nursery diversified so as not to depend on a single government program to drive demand for product. It branched out by offering plants for Department of Transportation, Forest Service and Park Service projects. As the public's interest in native plants grew, Plants of the Wild began to sell to more individual homeowners.

The nursery operates a retail and mail order business selling grass and

(continued on next page)

25 Years of CRP

wildflower seeds and shrub and tree plugs. It is a source for pollinator species, which are a new option for CRP plantings. Over the years, Plants of the Wild has also provided riparian plants for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

Plants of the Wild employs six full-time employees and 5 seasonal workers, which is significant for a town of less than 900 people. The nursery has six greenhouses, three shade houses, a large container yard and seed warehouses.

Gearing up for the large orders of native plants that accompany a CRP signup requires nursery manager Kathy Hutton and staff to do their homework. It can take a year or two to collect seed, treat it over winter, sow it and grow plants to a marketable size. That means guessing what plants will be in demand. Hutton explained that she follows Farm Bill developments, talks with agency personnel and works with planters to position the business for meeting demand.

How much of the business can be attributed to CRP varies depending on CRP signups and enrollments. "CRP is still very important to us. It's one of our mainstays," explained Hutton. In return, Plants of the Wild Nursery has played a major role in returning native plants to many acres throughout the Pacific Northwest.



Plants of the Wild willow starts - Photo by Patrick Lewis