

 <p><b>NEW YORK</b> STATE OF OPPORTUNITY.</p> <p><b>Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation</b></p> <p>Section: <b>Natural Resources</b></p>	<p>Policy Title: <b>Native Plants in State Parks and Historic Sites</b></p> <p>Directive: <b>NR-POL-013</b></p> <p>Effective Date: <b>06/01/2017</b></p>
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**Summary**

The New York State Parks System harbors an extraordinary diversity of plants, animals, and ecological communities that make a unique contribution to the biodiversity of New York State. This policy provides a framework for the protection of one component of this biodiversity—native plants—by offering guidelines for native plant conservation, management, and restoration within State parks and historic sites.

**Policy**

Definition(s)

- “Native plants” means any plant species (including shrubs and trees) that has evolved and naturally occurs in New York State. In some instances, plants are native (indigenous) to only certain regions of the state. The Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) can assist agency staff in determining whether a specific plant is considered “native” for the purposes of this policy.
- “Invasive species” is a species that: (a) is non-native to the ecosystem under consideration; (b) aggressively spreads and displaces or degrades native species and habitats; and (c) whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.
- “Locally sourced plants and seeds” are plants and seeds derived from plants that occur within the state and ideally from the ecoregion (i.e., a relatively homogenous ecological area defined by similarity of climate, landform, soil, potential natural vegetation, hydrology, or other ecologically relevant variables (EPA Biocriteria, 2009)).
- “Non-native species,” also referred to as an “alien,” “exotic,” or “non-indigenous” species, are species introduced from another region of North America or another continent as a direct or indirect result of human activity. Some non-native species are “invasive,” meaning they aggressively spread in the landscape; others cannot

reproduce in New York or have naturalized in to the landscape at levels that do not appear to substantially threaten native species or ecological communities.

As part of its mission, § 3.09(15) of the Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law (PRHPL) directs the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) to:

“Enhance the natural resources within the State park, recreation and historic site system by providing habitat for various wildlife species, including endangered and threatened species of fauna through practices such as ecological restoration, wetland conservation and the planting of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants indigenous to the area which act as food and protective cover for fauna. Selection of plant species or communities of species shall take into consideration the natural, ecological, historic, archeological, aesthetic, and public use resources in the immediate areas as well as the management goals of the park or site.”

In addition, § 9-1705 of the Environmental Conservation Law establishes the New York Invasive Species Council to, among other responsibilities, coordinate State actions to phase-out uses of invasive species and expand the use of native species as alternatives to non-native species. OPRHP is a member of the council.

OPRHP will promote the protection and restoration of native plants and ecological communities throughout the State park and historic site system by implementing the following goals and actions:

1. Identify and maintain native plant populations and natural communities, improving the overall quality of habitat and biodiversity within State parks and historic sites.
2. Control the introduction and spread of invasive species to reduce competitive displacement and loss of habitat, focusing on invasive species that pose the greatest ecological and operational concerns within specific parks, sites, and regions of the state. Subject to the availability of funding and effective control strategies, implement invasive plant removal projects in priority locations.
3. To the extent feasible, utilize native plants in all landscaping, re-vegetation, erosions control, and habitat restoration projects. The planting or introduction of invasive plant or tree species is prohibited. OPRHP relies on the lists established under 6 NYCRR Part 575, Prohibited and Regulated Invasive Species, for identification of prohibited species. As a matter of policy, plant species identified in the regulation as regulated invasive species are also prohibited from being planted in New York State OPRHP facilities. No parts of such plants can be introduced to OPRHP facilities.

4. To the extent feasible, landscaping and restoration projects should utilize native plants and seeds that are derived from NY State and ideally from that ecoregion within the state.
5. Develop partnerships and stewardship projects to increase OPRHP's capacity to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive plants and reduce their impacts on native plants.
6. Conserve populations and habitats of endangered, threatened, and rare plants and plant communities located within State parks and historic sites by reducing threat from invasive species.
7. Implement education, research, and monitoring projects that support native plant conservation and restoration.

#### Policy Exception

OPRHP recognizes that non-native plants, including exotic trees and flowers, are important cultural landscape elements in certain State parks, State historic sites, and State arboretums. In such locations, OPRHP may utilize non-native plants to maintain and restore significant cultural landscapes. In addition, OPRHP may utilize ornamental flowers, shrubs, and trees when landscaping park entrances and high-use areas, provided that pursuant to policy action #3 above, the agency will not plant or introduce invasive species. This policy recognizes that only some non-native species invasively spread in the landscape (planting of non-native species is limited to non-invasive plants).

#### Sources and Selection of Native Plants and Seeds

There is growing demand by public and private entities that purchase plant materials for landscaping and restoration projects to purchase native plants, native seeds, and plant materials grown from local seed sources. Procuring native plants and seeds from sources that are local to the planting site, when undertaken with knowledge of the plant species and ecology of the site, protects biological diversity and the genetic suitability of local populations. OPRHP will encourage the use of local plant material through its purchasing practices. The EMB, in consultation with regional staff, will compile and periodically update a regional list of nurseries and other sources where native plants and seeds may be obtained. A list of native plants information sources will also be developed to provide resources to staff in developing site and species plans for planting and restoration projects.

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## Forms

No applicable forms

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## Other Related Information

Native plants are the primary food source and a key structural component of our natural systems which provide many ecosystem services including aesthetics, flood control, carbon sequestration, and others. They are critical sources of food, shelter, and habitat for many animal species. Many plants also have historical and cultural significance and maintaining communities of native species is an important aspect of preserving our heritage. For restoration and landscaping, native plants often have high survivorship and vigor because they are well adapted to local conditions and have greater ecological value than non-native alternatives. Planting native plants also helps to reduce the threat of invasive species from encroaching on native species and habitats and supports the continued existence and enhancement of existing populations of native plants within State parks. Rare species (Young 2010) should not be planted or collected in State Parks without an OPRHP Research permit (and a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service permit in the case of federally-listed plant species) as this can alter the genetic integrity of the original populations.

New York Flora Atlas <http://newyork.plantatlas.usf.edu/> is the authority for determining if a plant species is native to New York State.

6 NYCRR Part 575 Prohibited and Regulated Invasive Species.

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/93848.html>

9 NYCRR Part 377.1(i) Regulated Activities

Young, S. M. 2010. New York rare plant status list. New York Natural Heritage Program, Albany, NY. [http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/fish\\_marine\\_pdf/2010rareplantstatus.pdf](http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/fish_marine_pdf/2010rareplantstatus.pdf)

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## History

06/01/2017 Change Directive reference from NR-POL-004 to NR-POL-013.

06/29/2015 The 2010 policy was reviewed and reissued with formatting changes and updated regulatory information.

09/27/2010 This policy is effective immediately and replaces all previous OPRHP policies regarding the conservation and management of native plants within State parks and historic sites under the agency's jurisdiction.