

Designing Curriculum for the SER-UW Native Plant Nursery

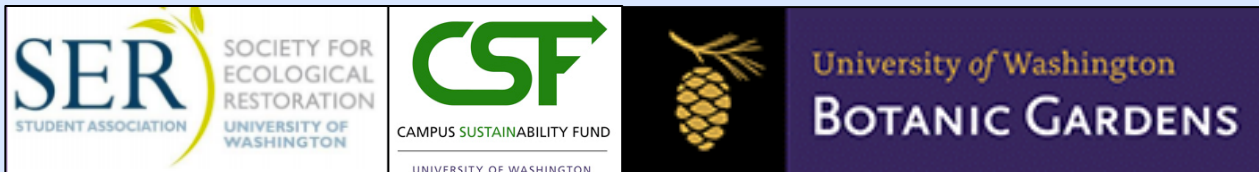
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Background

The Society for Ecological Restoration UW's (SER-UW) native plant nursery began in 2013, aiming to grow native plants for student restoration projects as well as become an educational resource to students and the public. For the last year, I have written and taught curriculum to improve the Nursery's mission to become a source of horticultural, experiential education at the University of Washington.

To support our mission of providing education to students and the public, I wrote three types of curriculum for the Nursery: 1.5 hour classes on native plant topics that I then taught to the public; mini-lessons to teach before volunteer work parties; and a quarter-long curriculum for Nursery managers to use to teach their undergraduate interns.

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Educational Theory

Active learning and experiential learning are both loosely defined as incorporating activities and interactive components to education. Studies have shown that incorporating activities, discussions, and other interactive components to lessons can help students' overall performance in class.¹ Experiential learning has also been shown to particularly benefit women, minorities, and low-income students.² The Nursery is a perfect place to implement active and experiential learning, as it requires constant hands-on work; all the Nursery needed was curriculum to format those tasks in a more educational direction. The curriculum I wrote strives to incorporate experiential learning components to increase student understanding of native plants and native plant production.



*Students attend lecture component of evening class,
Photo Credit Courtney Bobsin*



*Volunteers help weed young seedlings at the SER-UW Nursery,
Photo Credit Ceci Henderson*



*Students participate in interactive activity in evening class,
Photo Credit Adam Le Doux*

Works Cited

¹Freeman, S., Eddy, S. L., McDonough, M., Smith, M. K., Okoroafor, N., Jordt, H., & Wenderoth, M. P. (2014). Active learning increases student performance in science, engineering, and mathematics. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(23), 8410-8415.

²Eddy, S. L., & Hogan, K. A. (2014). Getting under the hood: how and for whom does increasing course structure work?. *CBE-Life Sciences Education*, 13(3), 453-468.