

# So You Want to Host a Native Plant Sale:

## A How-to Guide for the SER Nursery Bi-Annual Native Plant Sale



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## History of the SER-UW Nursery Plant Sale

As a nursery we are constantly propagating native plants in order to be sold or donated and planted for restoration purposes. Some of the plants we propagate are set aside to be sold in a bi-annual native plant sale which is what you are going to put together! These plant sales are held in both the fall and the spring in order to get native plants out into the hands of the public. SER-UW nursery began this plant sale in the fall of 2015, and since then it has become a much anticipated native plant sale that gains more and more popularity each year. It is going to be your job to help create that excitement around the plant sale as well as provide customers with a healthy, diverse plant stock to shop from.

### Overview

This is an important event for the nursery to undertake as this is how we receive a good portion of our funding from selling all these native plants. Being able to sell all student-grown, native and organically fertilized plants is quite unique for a nursery and is an awesome aspect of our plant sale in comparison to the many plant sales that occur at small nurseries around Seattle. This is the main event for the nursery in both the Fall and the Spring so bringing attention to it and properly conducting it is a must. Hopefully this document can aid you in planning and executing a fantastic native plant sale. As you create and host your plant sale, add on your successes to this document. It is intended to be a living document in order to aid future nursery managers and interns in creating the best possible plant sale.

### Past Plant Sale References

In creating this document I used the HOW TO PUBLIC PLANT SALE document found in the public plant sales folder under general information as well as information from past and present nursery managers.

## Your Responsibilities

### Nursery Managers:

- Facilitate entire plant sale
- Delegate tasks to volunteers and interns
  - Scheduling
  - Disseminating tasks
- Entirety of timeline is manager's responsibility
- If you have any question the "how to public plant sale" doc found in the public plant sale folder under general information

### Interns:

- Post advertising either on social media or physically place flyers in places around campus and local neighborhoods (See page 9)
  - Community centers
  - Coffee shops
  - Busy places around campus
- Provide help on the day of the event (set-up, plant sale, clean-up)
- Aid in staging plants in team work parties and volunteer work parties beforehand
- Bringing food for volunteers on day of event (if you would like to!)
- Manning the information table as well as setting up signage during day of event
- Provide customer service, greet customers, and ferry questions from customers
- Answer questions you can or direct questions to nursery staff
- Assist nursery managers with other plant sale tasks throughout the quarter as needed

### Volunteers:

- Provide customer service, greet customers, and ferry questions from customers
- Answer questions you can or direct questions to nursery staff
- Help set-up or take-down the plant sale
- Make sure plants are sale ready as they are being set out for sale
- Restock plants as needed
- Help customers take plants out to their cars

## Supplies Needed

- PLANTS! All the species you have available for sale
- Volunteers! For Friday work parties in order to prep the plants for sale throughout the quarter but also to help set up for the plant sale and provide help on the day of the plant sale (the more knowledgeable the volunteer is about plants the better they will be helping on the day of the event)
  - We try to reach out personally to knowledgeable/recurring volunteers to reduce training time and provide a better experience for our customers
- Plant identification tags
- Boxes for carrying sold plants out to cars
- Email capture sheet and plant suggestion capture sheet as well as a how did you hear about the plant sale sheet (to help us see which of our advertising methods is most effective to streamline the advertising process as we host more plant sales)
- Advertising (Posters for around campus and community, street signs for day of event- must be pre-approved by CUH)
- Square
- Ipad (remember to check out from Kane and install the square app)
- Camera (to get some sweet plant beauty shots or pics of the sale, this document does contain a section where you can source those photos from or add photos to) \*also needs to be checked out from Kane
- Cash box
- Food for volunteers and staff day of event (breakfast & lunch)
- Identification signs (plant tags in Drive) for plants at the sale
- SER pamphlets, handouts and other information for welcome table
- Tape for the day of, it comes in handy

## General Timeline

### Week 1:

- Pick a date for the plant sale (usually a Saturday or Sunday). This is a crucial step in order to provide enough time to get out advertising and prepare all the plants in time for the sale. (You may want to pick a date during the previous quarter. Also, make sure that you pick a date when no other plant sales are happening- there are many!)
- Once you pick a date, immediately put this into an event on Facebook and add it onto the SER-UW Google calendar. You may need to contact the SER President to add to this calendar. You can add in the specific species later in the quarter but right now it is most important to start getting the word out about this awesome plant sale! Also, email UWBG to have it added to their calendar in order to reach as many potential customers as possible.
- Start to work on designing your public advertising. CUH requires you have your signs posted on and around the DRC directing customers to be pre-approved so make sure you fit this into your schedule! This is a fairly time extensive process and will require a lot of availability by whomever chooses to undertake this
- Reserve the headhouse
  - Go to the CUH main desk in Merrill Hall and meet with the receptionist to reserve the space (at least a month in advance; need it reserved for both set-up, the sale and clean-up so reserve for a longer time period)

### Week 2:

- Finalize the advertising and start getting the flyers out into the public. Remember, students might come and buy one or two small plants but homeowners are our target audience because they have yards! We usually print 30-50 flyers and you can print these using our print code at the Miller Library or in the Miller printing room.
- Send plant sale flyers to emails on email list. Also, brainstorm new places to email.
- Brainstorm locations off-campus and then delegate who is going to post what where. The goal is to canvas as many places as possible where we can reach the largest amount of plant sale visitors without having to use too many posters as that can get expensive.

### Week 3:

- Start prepping the plants and finalizing which species are going into the plant sale so that list can be posted on the various online advertisements for the sale (this also helps nursery managers know which ones they have to sell, need to get ready and communicate with invested parties)
- Post a two week reminder for the sale and promote it to various groups on social media (See list on page 9) Facebook and Instagram, potentially share it to other social media groups
- Reserve the camera and the iPad from UW in Kane hall HERE -> <https://stlp.uw.edu/>

#### Week 4:

- Start to collect boxes.
- Assign who is bringing what to feed the volunteers on the day of the event. You will be serving breakfast as well as lunch for the volunteers and staff.
- Start staging species in or around the hoop house for the plant sale. Finalize the identification tag design (signs) for the species.
- Create the pricing sheet, list all the plants in alphabetical order make sure to list both common and latin names of plant and the prices for each size of the container if multiple container sizes will be present (this helps with setting them up on the day of the event, we place them in alphabetical order so the customer can easily find the species they are interested in)
- Look into recruiting volunteers
  - Send out volunteer forms
  - Schedule volunteers into time slots

#### Week 5-6:

- It's plant sale time! Post a social media reminder once a day for a week before the event.
- Send an email reminder to the email list one week before the sale.
- Download the square app onto the iPad after it is checked out
- Remember all photos and apps need to be removed from the devices before they are turned in so back up all the necessary information and photos right away!
- Print out plenty of copies of the plant pricing sheet (we run out of these guys quickly, maybe create a couple for us to reuse then a set that people can take home if they want to? Some customers are interested in keeping the names of the species they purchase)

#### Day of Plant Sale:

- Set-up should start about two hours before the plant sale begins. Customers will be coming as soon as the plant sale is open so make sure that everything is set up and ready to go quite quickly.
- Spend some time getting to know the species as well as figuring out how to work the square app. The app takes a little practice to get quick at for checking out.
- Take pictures of everything! It is good for determining how you designed your plant sale and how effective the sale was as well as for having some great advertising pictures later.

## Example Data Sheets

Feel free to use past data sheets in order to reuse for your plant sale

“Spring 2017 Plant Sale” folder under public plant sales (examples of used data sheets)

- Plants to sell
- Plant sale list
- Pricing printout
- Plant sale volunteer form

“Fall 2016 Plant Sale” under public plant sales

- Copy of mailing list document
  - Gather emails for sending out nursery information
- Need a separate document for gathering emails for general SER information
  - You will have to ask the SER president for this template

## Future Plant Sales

- Need a document to capture how individuals heard about the plant sale in order to determine where our advertising is working

Email List for Advertising (This is called “Potential Groups to Advertise To” in the General Plant Sale Information folder in Public Plant Sale folder on the Drive- it contains all the contact information you will need for each group, feel free to add to this list any new places or contacts you find!)

<b>Group/Organization</b>
Seattle P-Patch association
Friends of Yesler Swamp
Laurelhurst community
Beacon Hill Food Forest
Seattle Tilth
Master Gardeners
Orchid Society
Mountains to Sound Greenway
Forterra
Seattle Parks and Rec
Green Seattle Partnership
Green Kirkland Partnership
Conservation Northwest
Stewardship Partners
Sound Salmon Solutions
Skagit Land Trust
Earth Corps
Washington Conservation Corps
Friends of Seward Park
Friends of Discovery Park
SEFS grads
Everett Rain Garden Rebate Program
Snohomish County Eco Network
SER NW- Rolf Gersonde
UWBG- Adult Education Coordinator, Jessica Farmer
Karl Wirsing, SEFS communications
CSF

CoE, PoE
SER, Hortgrads
UW Farm- Newsletter on Mondays, Sarah Geurkink
Restore Cascadia Facebook Group
David Campbell
Biology Department
Dan Hintz
Jim Cronan

## Plant Sale Image Stock

- For spring 2017 plant sale photos in the drive go to nursery-> nursery photos-> work parties Spring 2017->plant sale
- For fall 2016 plant sale photos
  - nursery-> nursery photos-> fall 2016 plant sale
- For spring 2016
  - nursery-> nursery photos-> spring 2016 plant sale
- For fall 2015 plant sale
  - nursery-> nursery photos-> fall plant sale 11.15.2015

## Feedback

In Spring 2016, we conducted a survey of past nursery managers about the plant sale in order to best advertise and strategize the plant sale. Feedback that was received is listed below. The survey was sent out through Survey Monkey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LCQG5GN>) and included four questions. Each survey will be listed with the previous nursery manager who completed the survey.

## Survey Structure

1. What is the most important aspect/action for creating a successful plant sale in your opinion?
2. What is an aspect of the plant sale that you think detracts from its success? How would you address that problem in order to avoid or fix it?
3. Do you have any suggestions for this years plant sale? If so, why?
4. Do you have any other comments or concerns about this year's plant sale?

## Spring 2017 Responses

\*note that @uw.edu email addresses will be unuseable at a certain point after graduation so some of these email addresses might no longer be accessible to the nursery manager you are trying to contact

## Spring 2017 Nursery Managers

Kimmy- [kertel@uw.edu](mailto:kertel@uw.edu)

Q1: What is the most important aspect/action for creating a successful plant sale in your opinion?

I think having a plan before hand and getting tasks done ahead of time is super helpful. Also, advertising! Getting the word out is key to getting people to come buy your plants and support the nursery.

Q2: What is an aspect of the plant sale that you think detracts from its success? How would you address that problem in order to avoid or fix it?

I'm not sure, but the advertising could definitely use some more work. It is hard as the nursery is run by students and is an campus organization, and students only have so much time to put into it. If we could get more patrons we would have more sales and boost both our community presence/connections and our funding. Also, growing plants specifically for the sale could be helpful in the future.

Q3: Do you have any suggestions for this years plant sale? If so, why?

Aside from my above comments, I would try tracking how people heard about the plant sale in order to best reach them in the future, as far as continuing to track what kind of plants they would like to see there.

Q4: Do you have any other comments or concerns about this year's plant sale?

Work together and stay ahead of the game! Don't forget to have fun while putting together the plant sale!

Derek- [deallen4@uw.edu](mailto:deallen4@uw.edu)

Q1: What is the most important aspect/action for creating a successful plant sale in your opinion?

Setting a date for the sale early in the quarter, getting advertising out at least a month in advance, and broadcasting it to as many applicable networks as possible.

Q2: What is an aspect of the plant sale that you think detracts from its success? How would you address that problem in order to avoid or fix it?

Limited quantities of high demand species. I don't think this can or should be fully addressed.

Our main goal is to provide native plants to student projects. This year we were very successful in this regard, so our inventory of many sought after species was limited or, in some cases, zero.

Q3: Do you have any suggestions for this years plant sale? If so, why?

Preparing plants for the plant sale begins several months before the actual sale date. We had many individual plants that would have sold had we addressed production issues earlier in the year. Things like spreading out plants to provide them with the necessary amount of light, fertilizing, pest management, weeding, pruning, etc. Managers need to stay on top of these production techniques in order to have as many species/plants available and ready to sell.

Q4: Do you have any other comments or concerns about this year's plant sale?

I would recommend that the managers grow novelty native plants to be sold specifically at the plant sale. Native sedum would sell very well if we had started some a couple months prior to the sale date. Other quick growing annuals/perennials would also be worth growing, especially if they would be in bloom by the time of the plant sale.

## Past Plant Sale Managers Responses

Mary Margaret- [mmgreene@uw.edu](mailto:mmgreene@uw.edu)

Q1: What is the most important aspect/action for creating a successful plant sale in your opinion?

Pre-planning and starting the planning process well in advance--at least 2 months in advance.

There are a lot of parts to putting together the plant sale, and starting early will help you get the ball rolling. It is also helpful to get the core team of people who will be running the plant sale together and assign all the work to everyone, with deadlines associated with each task.

Q2: What is an aspect of the plant sale that you think detracts from its success? How would you address that problem in order to avoid or fix it?

I think the most likely thing to detract from success is not advertising the plant sale widely enough, early enough. People don't come to plant sales they don't hear about--it's what I struggled with in my first plant sale experience. Fliers for the plant sale and event e-mails, all

those methods of promoting the sale need to happen early and then also need to be repeated closer to the date of the plant sale.

Q3: Do you have any suggestions for this years plant sale? If so, why?

Make sure you put fliers not just on campus, but in the surrounding neighborhoods. Put fliers in public libraries around Seattle, in all the bulletin boards of other neighborhoods--because students might come by and buy a small plant, but it's homeowners that are willing and able to buy plants that are better suited for landscaping.

Q4: Do you have any other comments or concerns about this years plant sale?

I think this year's plant sale will go great--you guys are off to a great start. Happy to be here to answer any questions! (Ooh, and make sure you don't use ESRM 100 students as volunteers for running the plant sale. They're awesome, but you want to try to recruit volunteers that have more specific plant knowledge who will be able to help people when choosing out native plants to buy).

Unknown past plant sale manager

Q1: What is the most important aspect/action for creating a successful plant sale in your opinion?

Advertising! Early and often! I think we have a pretty decent list of the places to email which is already up in the list. I think sending out an early announcement and reminders really helps.

Q2: What is an aspect of the plant sale that you think detracts from its success? How would you address that problem in order to avoid or fix it?

I think the plant sale's success depends a lot on how much preparation is done. In the past the times that we have not recruited lots of volunteers to help or done a big advertising push there hasn't been a high turn out of customers.

Q3: Do you have any suggestions for this years plant sale? If so, why?

Not really. You guys have got this!

Q4: Do you have any other comments or concerns about this years plant sale?

After the fall 2015 plant sale we wrote out our reflections about the sale. That document can be found in the Nursery drive: public plant sales--> past plant sales --> fall 2015 sale.

Courtney- [cbobsin@uw.edu](mailto:cbobsin@uw.edu)

Q1: What is the most important aspect/action for creating a successful plant sale in your opinion?

Creating a poster and other advertising materials to promote the plant sale. Having these materials distributed early enough throughout campus as well as emails being sent out to all relevant local groups and people. There is an excel sheet on the Nursery drive that lists non profits and other local groups to reach out to. A really helpful spot was to post on the Restore Cascadia facebook group. If you need any help with finding this or other groups to contact, let me know! -Courtney Bobsin

Q2: What is an aspect of the plant sale that you think detracts from its success? How would you address that problem in order to avoid or fix it?

Having a large enough quantity of any particular plant can be a challenge. Reminding folks that we are a student run nursery focused on on-campus and student based restoration projects might be helpful. We can't always have the right sizes and quantities that everyone wants. Also, plants are looking their best at different times, and most of those times are not during the plant sale. Having photos in color that show what they will look like in bloom was helpful.

Q3: Do you have any suggestions for this years plant sale? If so, why?

Staging the plants outside the nursery the day before has always been very helpful. It allows any volunteer to run out on the day of and grab more plants without picking plants the Nursery wants to save/ reserve.

Q4: Do you have any other comments or concerns about this years plant sale?

No other comments. But I've ran two plant sales at the Nursery and am happy to sit down with folks to talk about the sale and all of the details.

Unknown past plant sale manager

Q1: What is the most important aspect/action for creating a successful plant sale in your opinion?

Advertising! Get the word out early and often. I can't emphasize this enough. The success of each plant sale has largely depended on how many people showed up. Good signage on the day of the event is also really important (so that people who want to come can actually find it! drop-ins are also a perk of good signage). Also, I think the signs for each species are super helpful for customers! The species list by both latin and common name was also great at the last sale.

Q2: What is an aspect of the plant sale that you think detracts from its success? How would you address that problem in order to avoid or fix it?

I think as long as you get people in the door, it will go well. Make sure the plants look good, have lots of volunteers on hand to answer questions, and have some books available to look up plants and show customers photos of plants in bloom, at maturity, etc. Make sure the square is working and pricing and availability is updated in square.

Q3: Do you have any suggestions for this years plant sale? If so, why?

Add water requirements to the species signs. And put way more signs up outside. If you can figure out a way to hang a banner on the fence on 45th you'd get so many drop-ins! And a sign on 41st, right in front of the main entrance to the parking lot at CUH is essential, in my opinion. Also, a way to make the entrance to the DRC actually look like the entrance to the plant sale would be really helpful. Not sure how to do this. Maybe have a pile of showy plants next to a big sign that reads "plant sale inside" with a big arrow, right by the door (which is propped open)? The less people have to wander around feeling lost, the better.

Q4: Do you have any other comments or concerns about this years plant sale?

You guys will do great! Let me know if I can do anything to help, and let me know when you set the date. I'll come down and hep out if I can.

Species Requested by Plant Sale Patrons at Spring 2017 Plant Sale for future plant sales

Beaked hazelnut  
Lonicera ciliosa  
Oxalis oregana  
Mock orange  
Red flowering currant  
Red huckleberry  
Indian plum  
Snowberry  
Cinquefoil  
Oak fern  
California myrtle  
Fragaria  
Salal  
Huckleberry  
Rhodedendron