

# LEADERSHIP IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD

## A 15-Year Vision for Native Plant Trust

### INTRODUCTION

At Native Plant Trust, we aspire to create a shared sense of wonder, appreciation, and care for New England's native plants. They are evolutionary marvels that translate local soils and physical landforms into the habitats that sustain all life. Over millennia the plants, insects, and wildlife native to our region have developed mutual relationships essential for their reproduction, food, and shelter. By conserving native plants in the wild and featuring them in designed spaces, we can nurture those biological relationships while protecting and enhancing the beauty of the landscape we call home.

### MISSION AND VALUES

Native Plant Trust is the nation's first plant conservation organization and the only one solely focused on New England's native plants. We save native plants in the wild, grow them for gardens and restorations, and educate others on their value and use.

### MISSION

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Conserving and promoting New England's native plants to ensure healthy, biologically diverse landscapes.

### VALUES

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#### Stewardship

Preserving the integrity, resiliency, diversity, and beauty of the natural world

#### Leadership

Inspiring action through vision, innovation, and expertise

#### Acumen

Focusing on long-term goals and making decisions based on science, research, experiential knowledge, best practices, and effectiveness

#### Community

Cultivating diversity, inclusion, and a sense of shared purpose and place

#### Collaboration

Amplifying impact through strategic and diverse partnerships

#### Integrity

Acting ethically, equitably, and with transparency

#### Sustainability

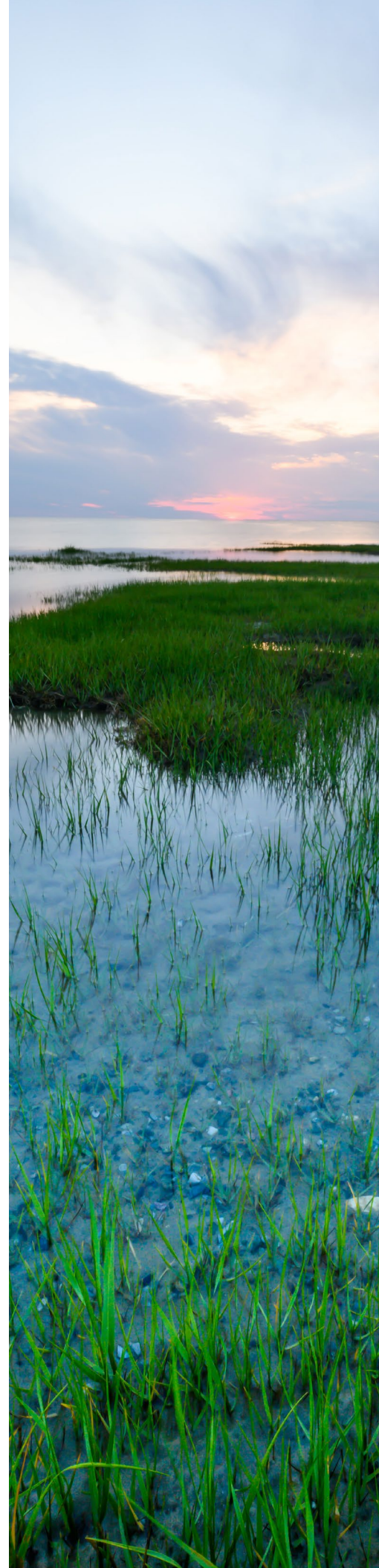
Aiming for the highest standards of sustainability in our operations

## ON PERILS AND HOPE

People are also part of nature, and we have the power to both harm and heal the natural systems on which we rely. The two environmental crises of our era—an accelerating loss of species and a rapidly changing climate—stem from human activities that we can alter. At the societal and personal levels, we can shift our patterns of development, use of chemicals, and consumption of resources. Here in New England, we can take steps to reduce the multiple threats to our region's plants and to restore landscapes that support the web of life. From replacing our lawns with native plants to advocating for better public policies, we can each help shape a more sustainable relationship with our imperiled natural world.

Native Plant Trust enters the next phase of our work at a time when awareness of the importance of native plants is growing. There are initiatives throughout the region to pass native planting ordinances, create “pollinator pathways,” and establish farm plots to increase the supply of native seed for restoration projects and nursery sales. This grassroots energy gives us both more allies and more hope that together we can improve the health of New England's landscapes. Through our leadership and collaborations, we envision:

- Inspiring people to appreciate, learn about, and act on behalf of native plants
- Harnessing the power of cutting-edge research, science, and technology to conserve and grow native plants
- Collaborating with people who have diverse cultural perspectives on plant life
- Saving the globally and regionally rare plant species in New England
- Securing plant diversity as the climate changes by strategically conserving the region's land
- Restoring degraded sites or declining habitats using plants grown from local seed without pesticides
- Inspiring people to see private gardens and public spaces as part of nature and to create places full of native plants that support all forms of life.



## REGIONAL FOCUS, NATIONAL IMPACT

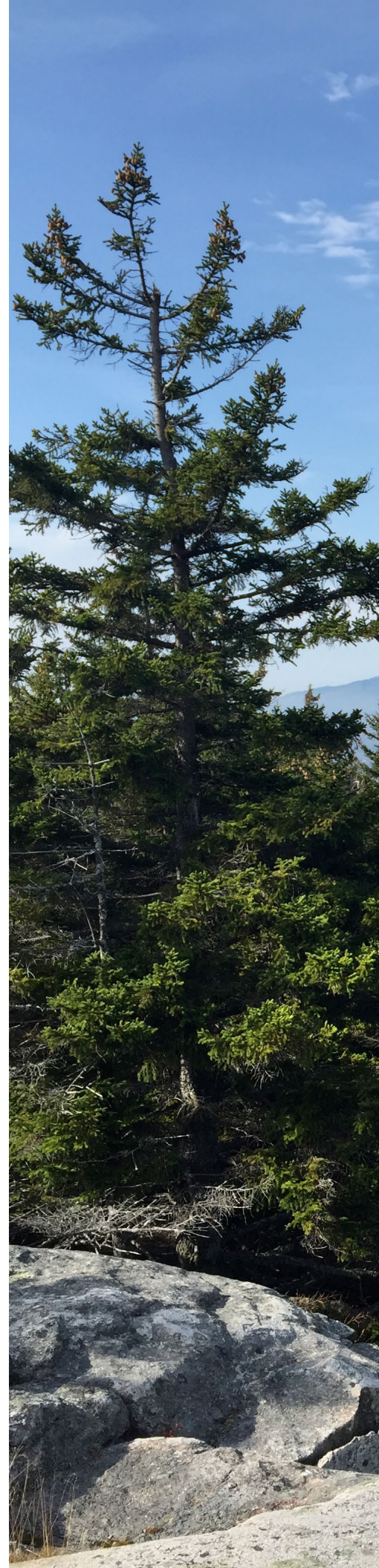
The ambitious vision is shaped by Native Plant Trust's regional scope and exceptional record of innovation and impact. On the ground we have achieved notable and lasting success—from banking seeds to restoring habitats to propagating hard-to-grow plants. Our education programs set the standard in our fields, attract highly respected professional partners, and engage a wide range of people interested in plants. We also consistently develop methods and models that are adopted by our colleagues across the nation. We publish books, technical reports, and online tools. Our decades-long leadership of a regional alliance focused on rare plants has strengthened conservation action in all six states and earned us trust and influence in state and federal agencies. Our active role in national and international coalitions not only amplifies our voice, but also connects us to exciting work done elsewhere that can improve our effectiveness here in New England.

One key to our success is robust engagement with volunteers, colleagues, and strategic partners in all our core areas. The “we” in these pages is often a network of people working together to achieve important goals.

## A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

We approach our work with passion and curiosity, and take actions grounded in science, ethics, and a commitment to both biological and cultural diversity. We acknowledge the need for respectfully incorporating into our work culturally diverse perspectives on plant life, scientific methods, and ways of interacting with plants. We are also committed to including people who may be disproportionately affected by a deteriorating environment but who have not had a voice within the conservation and horticulture organizations focused on solutions.

While ecosystems have always been dynamic, we are seeing shifts in our flora on a human, rather than geologic, timeframe. Thus, the definition of what is a native plant and plant community will likely change as species move, adapt to an altered climate, and establish new mutual interactions. To be effective, we must recognize that our knowledge is also dynamic and incomplete. We therefore need to be humble, open-minded, and willing to adjust our course or take risks when science or experience suggests new paths. We also need to be nimble, to best use the latest tools technology offers.



Over the next fifteen years, Native Plant Trust will focus on a *set of critical issues*. Our initiatives and public engagement will strive for measurable success in:

- Stemming or reversing the loss of plant diversity, pollinators, and ecological function due to such factors as land use practices, pesticides, industrial horticulture, and the lack of sources for native seed
- Mitigating the effect of climate change on rare plants, plant communities, and the spread of pests, pathogens, and invasive plants
- Improving plant and climate literacy through education to stimulate informed action, from advocacy to better planting practices
- Advancing policies, creating incentives, or increasing funding to protect rare plants and natural habitats or to encourage native plantings in restored and designed spaces.

With a wealth of regional data; established infrastructure like our seed bank, garden, nursery, and sanctuaries; and robust educational programs, we are uniquely poised for *continued leadership in our core areas*. We envision:

- Conducting research to advance botanical knowledge and both conservation and horticultural practice
- Creating and equitably sharing innovative resources, tools, and replicable models
- Practicing and demonstrating the aesthetic and biological value of ecological horticulture, which uses native plants and bans pesticides to enhance the landscape for the benefit of all life
- Creating learning opportunities that inspire curiosity and better practices, involve diverse perspectives, teach skills, and train the next generation of professionals
- Engaging people from diverse communities in dialogue and collaboration
- Fostering collaborations that advance our own work and that of our partners
- Communicating effectively with a range of people, organizations, and agencies to amplify our voice, build constituencies for native plants, and move native plants to the forefront of key sectors.

Within these broad areas, we will build on our successful programs, transform them as needed to meet our goals, and create new initiatives that will have a lasting impact on the landscape and in our disciplines. In addition, we will align our plant conservation work with targets in the United Nations' Convention on Biological Diversity and focus on the land protection goals in our groundbreaking plant diversity report.



## ACHIEVING THE VISION

In the coming years, the effects of climate change will be more visible on the landscape—from shifts in species distribution in the wild to changes in what plants will thrive in our gardens. *Leadership that inspires collective, strategic action* can ensure we protect the most important places, save endangered species, and create better connected, better designed, and more resilient landscapes. Here are key pathways for success.

### *Leadership in Science and Research*

- We will constantly refine our understanding of the native plants of New England, through taxonomic, genetic, propagation, and plant-animal research; through data collection and analysis; and by working with and embracing the knowledge of Indigenous people.
- We will both study and aggregate data on the shifts in species composition, abundance, and distribution due to climate change and place that data in long-term historical context as a basis for conservation action.
- We will conduct research at our sanctuaries and use that research to demonstrate effective stewardship of conserved land.
- We will use our expertise and research to lead the development of policies and practices that affect the flora of New England, such as those related to the assisted migration of both rare and common plants as the climate changes.

### *Leadership through Engagement and Partnerships*

- We will innovate in and expand our industry-leading public programs, which are a powerful way to inspire a passion for native plants and to extend our geographic and demographic reach.
- We will respectfully engage with the diverse range of people who care about a greener world, seek to learn from us, or want to share their knowledge.
- We will engage more fully with allied fields and integrate soil science, entomology, paleobotany, etc. into our networks, research, practice, and educational programming.
- We will inspire people to think of their gardens and designed spaces as part of nature and to create places that are both beautiful and full of life.
- We will use our expertise and research to advocate for local, state, and federal policies and programs that conserve, restore, or reduce threats to New England's native plants and that promote the use of native plants in designed spaces.



### ***Impact through Core Initiatives***

- We will use the 2021 plant diversity report (and subsequent research) to advocate for strategic land protection throughout the region, to focus management activities, and as the basis for conservation research.
- We will use our research, management, seed banking, and propagation expertise to undertake and support initiatives to restore and augment populations of rare plants and to restore or stabilize critical sites or habitats.
- We will ensure that Garden in the Woods is the premier native plant botanic garden and exemplar of ecological horticulture by implementing the master plan and conducting studies documenting the impact on the site's biodiversity.
- We will embrace Nasami Farm's role as the leading native plant nursery in New England and will support the increasing demand for native plants by sharing our expertise and partnering with other nurseries for production.
- We will lead region-wide efforts to increase the supply of ecotypic native seed through sustainable farming and will serve as an expert advisor and the regional seed bank.
- We will use the latest technology to transform our conservation work, to engage new audiences at our properties and across the region and nation, and to ensure access and dialogue.
- We will reduce our carbon footprint and become a model of sustainability, especially in the nursery and retail operations.

### **CONCLUSION**

Today, Native Plant Trust is stronger and more effective than at any time in its nearly 125-year history. With dedicated members and supporters, talented staff, a robust and active volunteer corps, and valuable partners across New England, we are able to achieve more than our modest size would suggest is possible. But we are operating at peak capacity. To meet the demand for our expertise and programs and to achieve our mission, we need to grow. We need to invest in the staff, technology, and facilities that will enable us to meet the challenges of our era. With strategic growth, we can reach more people, amplify our impact, and be more effective stewards of this beautiful world.

Ultimately, success relies on inspiring, engaging, and collaborating with a wide range of people, who take actions both large and small to save plants and improve the landscape. Together, we can achieve an ambitious vision: ***New England's native plants will exist in vigorous populations within healthy, evolving ecosystems, and people across the region will actively protect them in the wild and use them in their gardens for their beauty and ecological value.***

