SUBJECT: Plant Materials Salvage and Selection for Pima County Projects

DEPARTMENT(S) RESPONSIBLE: All Public Works, Facilities Management

PURPOSE

This Administrative Procedure establishes a consistent procedure for plant selection and salvage for projects constructed by Pima County and Pima County Regional Flood Control District (District) to ensure compliance with state and local requirements, and to provide a unified approach for use of native plants.

The Native Plant Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 18.73 in the Pima County Code), enforced by Development Services, applies to private development and special taxing districts. The Environmentally Sensitive Roadway Design Guidelines applies only to Pima County Department of Transportation. Therefore, these new procedures will provide a consistent approach to selection of plants across all County departments, including facilities or improvements constructed and operated by Pima County. All departments shall follow these procedures for new construction, whether or not there is any “landscaping” planned.

PLANT MATERIAL SALVAGE AND SELECTION

1. Avoidance and Minimization:

Pima County projects, to the maximum extent practicable, shall preserve-in-place native plants on the project site via the following practices:

a. conservation of natural areas,

b. preservation of natural drainage flow through site design, and

c. minimization of disturbed areas.

2. Regulated Riparian Habitat:

   Determine if project is located within Regulated Riparian Habitat on PimaMaps and contact Regional Flood Control District for requirements if impacted.

3. Arizona Native Plant Law:
Landowners must provide notice of any destruction or removal of protected native plants, as required by Arizona Department of Agriculture. The Arizona Administrative Code (p.41-51) requires a Notice of Intent to Clear Land 60 days prior to clearings of an area over ¼ acre; exception for emergency repairs. The Plant Law applies to state, county, special district, and city land. The Arizona Native Plant Law does not apply to federal or tribal land.

4. Compliance with other Jurisdictions:
If this is a County- or District-managed project that is to be maintained, owned or operated by another jurisdiction, contact that jurisdiction regarding any requirements.

5. Plant Salvage:
If any native plants exist onsite, the Pima County Native Plant Nursery (NPN) shall be the first point of contact for potential plant salvage. Contact the NPN manager at Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Department, or phone 724-5000.

6. Plant Selection:
When plant materials are to be specified as part of a new Pima County project or facility, the priority of plant specification shall be as follows:
- First Choice: Plants native to project site
- Second Choice: Sonoran Desert Plants
- Third Choice: Chihuahuan Desert Plants
- Fourth Choice: ADWR Tucson Water Use Category 1 and 2 plants

The Pima County Native Plant Nursery (NPN) shall be your first point of contact for plant procurement on Pima County projects. NPN must be contacted as soon as a landscaping plan and tentative list have been developed for a project, to allow grow-out of plants to project specifications, to secure your preferred species for the project, and to reduce costs associated with plant procurement; ideally at least a year in advance. Substitutions may be required as installation date comes closer, and during installation. Close contact with NPN is imperative throughout the project, especially if projects are delayed. For the Pima County Native Plant Nursery, contact the manager at Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Department, or phone 724-5000.

Regardless of the plant materials supplier, Sonoran Desert native plants shall be selected to the maximum extent practicable.

7. Prohibited Plants:
The Pima County Health Department prohibits the following vegetation: Texas mulberry and fruiting European olive trees. Plants listed as noxious weeds by the Arizona Department of Agriculture are also prohibited. These shall not be used under any circumstance.

8. Invasive Species Management:
Management and control of invasive species, particularly buffelgrass (Cenchrus ciliaris), fountain grass (Cenchrus setaceus), yellow bluestem (Bothriochola ischaemum), stinknet (Oncosiphon pilufer), and African Sumac (Searsia lancea) are of critical concern. At a minimum, buffelgrass is to be identified and managed per Public Works Standard Operating Procedure 2009-02 or its successor. Additional guidance is available in Standard Operating Procedure 201-01 or its successor. Control and eradication of invasive species from a site is typically a multi-year effort, and requires advance planning for chemical treatments, multiple years of follow-up treatments, and regular monitoring for continued spread of plants. Minimize impact to native grasses when
applying chemical treatments. Contact the Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Invasive Species Program Coordinator at 724-5000 for clarification of Standard Operating Procedures 201-01 and 2009-02 and for assistance with resources for plant identification, inventory, mapping, and control of buffelgrass and other invasive species.

9. Low Impact Design and Plant Irrigation:
Rather than relying solely on supplemental irrigation, County and District projects using plant materials shall be designed to incorporate water-harvesting principles. For additional guidance, consult the Low-Impact Development Guidance Manual.

Project Schedule
Site Analysis/ Planning and Design
   o Inventory Protected and significant native plants; maximize preservation in design.
   o Map natural water flow paths, especially areas with dense vegetation; maximize preservation in design.
   o Review Flood Control District’s Riparian Habitat Mitigation Ordinance. Mitigation is required when a third of an acre of regulated riparian habitat.
   o Review sewer locations on PimaMaps; incorporate in design via Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department Engineering Design Standards. Vegetation may not hinder maintenance vehicle access to manholes. Deep-rooted plants may not be used near sewer pipelines.
   o If the project is maintained or operated by another jurisdiction, contact that jurisdiction early to comply with requirements.
   o Design using primarily native Sonoran Desert plants
   o Contact Native Plant Nursery for available plant selection and scheduling of project plant grow-out.
   o Map and manage buffelgrass and other invasive species.
   o Schedule field visit with Native Plant Nursery to discuss salvage. Work salvaged plants into design, if possible.
   o CRITICAL: Notify Native Plant Nursery immediately if there are shifts in project schedule or selected plant list.

Construction
   o If clearing over ¼ acre, file Notice of Intent to clear land with Arizona Dept. of Ag. at least 60 days prior to construction; exceptions only for emergency repairs.
   o Before project award, contact Native Plant Nursery to coordinate any changes in selected plant availability, construction timeline, or salvage considerations.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Office of Sustainability and Conservation shall review this procedure with relevant county departments every five years, and revise as needed.