

Texas Native Seeds Program

TEEA 2019 Winner: Agriculture



The Texas Native Seeds Program, created by the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute of Texas A&M University, started as the South Texas Natives Project in 2001 in Kingsville, Texas. Their mission was to develop commercialized sources of native seeds, which anyone could buy and plant for restoration. Since then, they have expanded to the entire state and impacted thousands of acres of native habitats in Texas. This restoration project benefits the environment by ensuring healthy watersheds and providing habitats for wildlife and pollinators.

This statewide initiative develops native seed sources, conducts research, and enables agencies, industries, and the public to restore native habitats. The team works to collect native seeds and conduct science-based processes to select the ecotypes of those plants best suited for restoration, as well as the best restoration methodology for common scenarios. The seed selections are licensed to companies to mass produce and make available to the public, agencies, and industries to restore the environment. Commercialization and distribution of these seeds enable the restoration of tens of thousands of acres of native plants each year.

Cooperation with partners, private landowners, and agencies help make this project exceptional. For example, TxDOT changed their seeding specifications for two-thirds of Texas roads in the last decade, and is currently working on the remaining one-third. The Valley Crossing Pipeline was another notable project where 42 miles of the new pipeline was reseeded using adapted native plants, helping the environment by providing a home to wildlife and monarch butterflies. By enabling restoration, the program has had a profoundly positive environmental impact throughout Texas.

To date, 41 native seed selections have been developed by the program. For the last decade, at least 20,000 pounds of the native seeds developed by the program have been sold to consumers annually.

In addition to increasing and distributing native seeds, the program works to educate the public through presentations and field days that have been attended by thousands of citizens. With the help of numerous state agencies, non-government organizations, and citizens across Texas, the project has impacted over 100,000 acres of Texas landscape.