



Montana
Native
Plant
Society

To observe - conserve - educate

P.O. Box 8783 Missoula, MT 59807

November 27, 2004

Pat Cross
Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
2705 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

Dear Mr. Cross:

The Montana Native Plant Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of Montana's native plants and plant communities. Our mission encompasses educating the public about the value of our native flora and, as part of that goal, chapters throughout the state have been distributing packets of information about landscaping with Montana native plants. The packets also include information about wise landscaping choices when wildfire is a concern.

We would like to thank DNRC and the Keep Montana Green Association for making available the brochure *Firewise Landscaping for Woodland Homes*. This informative brochure has been included in hundreds of our landscaping packets that have been distributed to the public throughout the state. The brochure provides a common sense approach to creating defensible spaces around woodland homes. We are particularly pleased to note that the brochure recommends Montana native plant species. This is particularly important in woodland and urban-interface settings where exotic plants may escape into native landscapes, becoming the noxious weeds of tomorrow. The only suggestion we have for improvement is the removal of crested wheatgrass that is listed as a native grass. Crested wheatgrass is not native and can be invasive in some circumstances.

We understand that the brochure is to be reprinted and may be out by spring 2005. At that time we hope to again include the brochure with the literature we provide to the public. As an interim publication, *Fire-Resistant Plants for Montana Landscapes* was made available to us. Unfortunately, we must express grave concerns about this handout. Many people who are concerned about wildfire and are motivated to make changes on their properties live in the urban-interface zone – the area where human habitation comes into contact with native landscapes. It is particularly important for people living in those areas to be aware of their impact on native ecosystems and to avoid planting species that have a history of aggressive behavior or can spread unchecked into wildlands. We consider several of the species listed on the handout to be aggressive invaders in some situations in Montana. We would like to recommend that DNRC avoid distributing this handout, rework the handout to remove potential invaders or make it available only to

people who live in core areas of cities. Russian olive should be removed completely since it can be spread by birds, is very aggressive, and is on the noxious weed watch list of some counties. Likewise, buckthorn (*Rhamnus* spp.) should be removed or specific native species recommended. *Rhamnus cathartica* is a very aggressive non-native species that is listed as noxious in other states.

We appreciate your efforts to make accurate and timely information available to Montana citizens regarding landscaping and wildfire and we look forward to the new edition of *Firewise Landscaping for Woodland Homes*.

Thank you very much.



Linda Iverson
Chair, Landscape Committee



Betty Kuropat
President

Sent 12/6/2004 BK