

Tree Planting Group Makes Commitment to Native Plants

by Janet Ellis*

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Native plants will benefit from a recent decision made by the Board of Directors of Growing Friends of Helena, which is a group of citizens committed to beautifying the area through planting trees. Montana Audubon, the Kelsey Chapter of the Montana Native Plant Society, and Last Chance Audubon recently approached Growing Friends to consider two policies to benefit both Helena and native plants. On March 11, 2004, the board adopted both of them.

The first policy states that Growing Friends will no longer support projects that plant the following species: Russian Olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*), Tamarisk (Salt Cedar) (*Tamarix* species), and European Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*). These trees can cause significant problems for native plants, and their spread should not be encouraged or promoted. This policy includes 1) not giving money to projects that use these species; 2) not using these species in projects done by Growing Friends volunteers; and 3) excluding these species from any publications done in the future.

In an effort to ensure that all projects have long-term benefits for the area, the board also adopted a second policy that will require that native plants be used in certain projects. The policy establishes a list of native plants (provided by the Kelsey Chapter), along with criteria to guide the board in its decisions about which projects should require the use native plants. The locations where native plants will be required include: 1) along streams such as Tenmile Creek and its tributaries and Prickly Pear Creek and its tributaries; 2) adjacent to wetlands; 3) adjacent to lakes and ponds such as Spring Meadow Lake and the Fairgrounds Duck Pond; and 4) in or adjacent to natural areas (areas where naturally

occurring native vegetation exists on, close to, or downstream from the project site), including parks such as Mount Helena City Park and Nature Park. It should be noted that native plants will not be required in projects that Growing Friends plants in neighborhoods, along boulevards, and adjacent to soccer fields.

**Janet Ellis of Montana Audubon spearheaded this effort. Thanks also to Kathy Lloyd, Phil Johnson, Peter Lesica, Cary Lund, and Jo Lace for their help.*