



Montana
Native
Plant
Society

To observe - conserve - educate

P.O. Box 8783 Missoula, MT 59807

26 November 2010

Mr. Tim Tackes
Mountain West Cooperative
4570 N. Reserve Street
Missoula, MT 59808

Dear Mr. Tackes,

We are writing on behalf of approximately 600 members of the Montana Native Plant Society (MNPS). MNPS is an organization dedicated to preserving, conserving and studying the flora of Montana and educating the public on the values of the native flora and its habitats.

Some of our members have noticed that Cenex sells Secar grass seed and calling it bluebunch wheatgrass (Montana's state grass). At one time this was considered to be a cultivar of bluebunch wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicatum* or *Pseudoroegneria spicata*). However, in recent years agrostologists have realized that it is a different species found only along the Snake River Canyon near Lewiston, Idaho. A discussion of Snake River wheatgrass (*Elymus wawawaiensis*) can be found in the Flora of North America, Volume 24, p. 332. As you probably know the climate of Lewiston, Idaho is quite different from western Montana, and this species may not be adapted to our climate. MNPS suggests that Cenex label Secar as Snake River wheatgrass and reconsider selling this species at all in Montana. On the other hand, Goldar is bluebunch wheatgrass originating from the Blue Mountains of eastern Washington and is appropriate for our climate.

Cenex also sells a "Montana Wildflower Mix" that contains many species that are not native to Montana. MNPS is especially concerned about *Iberis umbellata*, *Papaver rhoeas* and *Cheiranthus allionii*. These three species are not even native to North America much less Montana. There is always a possibility that they could escape cultivation to become invasive. MNPS suggests that you discontinue selling Eurasian plants in seed mixes that your customers probably believe are harmless natives. We would be happy to help you assemble a list of native species for your wildflower seed mix. Thank you for your time.

Regards,

Dave Hanna, president

Peter Lesica, Conservation Chair