

Colorado State University Extension

2026 NATIVE PLANT MASTER® PROGRAM GUIDELINES

TRI-RIVER AREA

The Native Plant Master® (NPM) Program is an award winning, non-credit, educational program offered by various county Extension offices through Colorado State University Extension.

Native Plant Master Course Themes

Each Native Plant Master (NPM) course is made up of three sessions held three successive weeks. Sessions will cover -

Botanical characteristics of **plant families** and species, identification using a botanical key, scientific names, and stewardship of native plants

Ecological relationships including non-native species, noxious weeds, and relationships with wildlife, pollinators, other plants, etc.

Human uses, including use of natives for sustainable landscaping, ethnobotanical and other human uses.

The third session will start with a written field exam on material from first and second sessions.

NPM Course Details

- All NPM courses are held in the field. Please check the directions and be sure to arrive at the first session 15 minutes prior to the scheduled start time as the trainer will have materials to distribute. All sessions start promptly, so please plan ahead to arrive and be ready to leave the parking area for the trail by the designated time. The instructor will be present 15 minutes in advance of each course session day so participants may ask questions before the session begins. Smoking is prohibited on trails, except in areas designated by the instructor. No pets. Please leave pets at home. Participants may only attend the course they are enrolled in.

Required Materials: All class participants must bring *Flora of Colorado, 2nd Edition (2022 or 2024 printing)* by Jennifer Ackerfield to each class session. Plant identification with an emphasis on scientific names and families and keying using this text is a significant focus of the course. Each course will cover 35+ plants, 9+ will be keyed using *Flora of Colorado, 2nd Edition*.

Please contact the Tri-River Area office in Mesa County to see if copies are available for sale. Books are also available through the Colorado Native Plant Society bookstore (<https://conps.org/conps-store>), local and online retail outlets, and the publisher (800-621-2736). **Be sure you are purchasing the newest edition.**

Book rental: You can rent *Flora of Colorado, 2nd Edition*, through CSU Tri-River Area Extension for the duration of a course. (Book is returned at the last session.) The fee is \$15 per course. Please contact 970-244-1834 if you are interested in renting a book.

Botany Prep Classes & Materials provided to enrolled participants:

- (1) Two online self-paced botany prep-classes will be available for registered participants: *Basic Field Botany* and *Plant Families and How to Use a Dichotomous Key*.
- (2) Native Plant Manual for taking notes which you will receive at your first class.
- (3) 10X-magnification hand lens.

Additional recommended materials to bring to each class:

- (1) *Flora of Colorado*, 2nd Edition (Must have for class)
- (2) Pencil, highlighter, or page flags
- (3) Water and snacks
- (4) Warm clothing, sunscreen, rain/wind protection, and good hiking shoes

Course Conditions

- Sessions will be held in almost any weather. Only in the event of extreme weather (for example, snow, hazardous lightning, or continuous rain/muddy conditions) will class be cancelled. If you suspect weather conditions warrant cancellation, call your instructor the evening before the session to see if class will be cancelled. If a session is cancelled, the instructor will contact the participants and the session will be held on the scheduled "rain date." Make-up sessions will not be held for those who are not able to attend a session.
- Courses may require strenuous walking for extended periods on steep inclines for two or more miles on wet, rough, and/or slippery footing during windy, cold, hot, rainy, or snowy days. Courses include risks, hazards and dangers that are integral to natural areas. Please bring appropriate clothing, equipment, footwear, etc. so that you will be comfortable in a variety of weather and trail conditions. Restrooms may be available at the trailhead but will not be present anywhere else on the trail.

NPM Course Exam

- To become certified in the NPM Program, you must pass the written final exam with a "C" or better. The exam is given at the beginning of the third session of the course.
- The exam is conducted on the trail where you will be asked to identify living specimens and provide additional information. Participants will have 1.5 hours to complete the exam. Scientific names should be those used in *Flora of Colorado, 2nd Edition*. The exam is "open book", therefore spelling of technical terms counts.
- The exam will cover only material from the first and second sessions. You may use your required textbook *Flora of Colorado, 2nd Edition* to complete the exam. No other books (including the NPM Manual) or glued or pasted items such as tabs or loose notes will be allowed during the exam. It is recommended you take notes in your *Flora of Colorado* textbook, so they are available during the exam.

NPM Course Refund Policy

A full refund, less a \$15 processing fee, will be given if notification is given to CSU Tri-River Area Extension 30 days prior to the course date. If notification is given between 2-4 weeks prior weeks prior - 50% refund. Cancellation less than two weeks prior - no refund.

Cost

The cost per course is \$150.

Registration

Registration opens on February 9, 2026 at 8am through Eventbrite:

<https://csuextensiontra.eventbrite.com>

Certified Native Plant Master

To become certified:

- NPM participant must complete three different courses held in three different life zones (i.e., foothills, plains, or montane) **OR** held at different times of the year to minimize overlap of plants covered
- Pass each course exam with a grade of "C" or better.

The three courses do not need to be completed in one year. Participants who complete the certification program and will receive a certificate, special pin, window sticker, and patch.

Native Plant Master Instructors

- A Certified Native Plant Master may apply to become an instructor mentee who will work with an existing instructor to observe and co-teach a small portion of a NPM course. Mentees may become instructors once they have successfully taught one or more NPM course with a current instructor. At the discretion of the County Program Leader, individuals with significant plant expertise may become instructors without being a Certified NPM. However, to understand how a NPM course is taught, they must take at least one NPM course as a student before becoming a mentee.
- All mentee instructors will be required to pass the Colorado State University Extension background check process before being allowed to team teach with an existing instructor.
- Instructors may register for NPM courses or classes in any county at no cost or at a reduced cost, space available basis.

Accessibility

If you need anything in order to participate in this program, please contact Jeff Pieper (jeff.pieper@colosate.edu or 970-244-1834) at least 14 business days prior to the start of the first class.

For More Information

For more information about the Native Plant Master Program, please contact Jeff Pieper, Colorado State University Tri River Area Extension at jeff.pieper@mesacounty.us or (970) 244-1834. Alice Smith can help with registration.

Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity

Colorado State University Extension is an equal opportunity provider. | Colorado State University does not discriminate on the basis of disability and is committed to providing reasonable accommodations. | CSU's Office of Engagement and Extension ensures meaningful access and equal opportunities to participate to individuals whose first language is not English.

Colorado State University Extension es un proveedor que ofrece igualdad de oportunidades. | Colorado State University no discrimina por motivos de discapacidad y se compromete a proporcionar adaptaciones razonables. | Office of Engagement and Extension de CSU garantiza acceso significativo e igualdad de oportunidades para participar a las personas quienes su primer idioma no es el inglés.

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