

Wetland plants a big draw



STANDARD JOURNAL/JOYCE EDLEFSEN

In its 20-acre property in Hibbard the wholesale plant-growing operation of North Fork Native Plants includes about 7 acres of hydroponic ponds, other plots where trees and shrubs are growing in various sized pots and tubes. The company also propagates plants in its greenhouse on the site. Buyers have several options available for the native plants, from the large mats and sod to bare-root grasses, an economical choice.

► Products can be ordered throughout intermountain West

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REXBURG — If you must buy wetland grasses in bulk, North Fork Native Plants is the place to shop in the upper valley.

The company has a unique clientele looking for solutions to often-complicated wetland problems, so its customers don't include home gardeners looking for petunias or pansies for patio planting.

You won't find ornamental flowers in this nursery.

That's why the customers invited on a tour of the company's 20-acre operation near the Henry's Fork west of Rexburg included representatives of state and federal agencies, developers, landscapers and other people whose job is to mitigate issues related to wetlands.

The tour was organized to introduce clients to the company's new name and some new products. First on the agenda was the offer of bug spray and rubber boots for wading.

Formerly called Native Sod Solutions, the company employs 18 people full time during the busy summer season. The nursery is open from about April 1 to the end of October.

What they do at the low-key, under-the-radar wholesale facility is tend to the native plants

More about:

North Fork Native Plants

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www.northforknativeplants.com

that serve a unique niche in the landscaping industry. Sales are handled at an office in Driggs.

That's why an Idaho Transportation Department representative was there, checking out what's available in wetland sod, native grasses pre-planted in biodegradable coconut fiber mats. They are used for wetland reclamation and restoration.

Natural Resource Conservation Service employees were there, asking questions about cottonwoods and willows and how much success the company has had using them to stabilize streambanks where vegetation has eroded.

A Harriman State Park official watched closely at the demonstration on manmade wildlife islands, a product that might be applicable at the park in Island Park.

According to its Web site, www.northforknativeplants.com, the company's original product was the wetland sod.

Now the company also offers the islands, deep-rooted willows, bare-root wetland plans and containers of trees and shrubs.

Where did all the native plants originate?

Nursery Manager Ty Blacker says the plants and seeds originally were harvested from wild, native plants, mostly on private property and occasionally on public land through permitting.

From that original stock the company has developed products that can be ordered and delivered throughout the intermountain West.

It also can supply plants for custom orders.

The company and its sister consulting and planning company, Intermountain Aquatics, seem to thrive on innovation and welcome the challenges certain mitigation and restoration project present.

Tucked away down a dirt road near the river on land that once was a grain field, North Fork Native Plants quietly offers services to a variety of customers from throughout the West to buy native plants for special needs while providing jobs and boosting the upper valley economy.



Jeff Kausmann of North Fork Native Plants shows how wetland grasses are grown in hydroponic fields and sold as wetland sod. The company, with a growing facility in Hibbard and a sales office in Driggs, offers the wetland sod as well as other native plants.

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