

Why Grow These Trees?



In the past, government agencies, local watershed groups, landowners, and volunteers purchased plants from nurseries as far away as Oregon for conservation projects along Vermont's rivers and streams. Although these plants were the same species as found here, it was unclear how well they would survive our extreme winters. In response to the need for native trees and shrubs, the Intervale initiated the Vermont Riparian Project in 2001, now known as the Intervale Conservation Nursery. Today, the Conservation Nursery includes: ash, birch, cherry, cottonwood, cranberry, dogwood, elm, maple, oak, serviceberry, willow, and elderberry—all grown from native seeds. Most trees and shrubs are large enough to plant after two years in the Nursery.



Seeds and cuttings are given a strong start in tubes in the greenhouse using Intervale Compost's Germinating Mix, which is designed to maximize growth.



Riparian areas serve as buffers for active floodplains. In the Intervale's riparian area, trees and shrubs should tolerate flooding, icing, and the deposition of large amounts of sediment.

Plants that grow successfully in riparian areas have a number of defining qualities and characteristics:

- They can tolerate being in wet soil for long periods of time.
- Their root systems are dense and serve to stabilize the bank.
- They are tolerant of flooding, and can often withstand ice buildup on riverbanks.
- They provide valuable food and shelter for abundant wildlife that dwell in Vermont's riparian areas.



After several months of growth in the controlled greenhouse environment, some seedlings are ready to be transplanted into natural areas.

(Photographs courtesy of the Intervale Foundation.)