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**Potomac Watershed  
Partnership**



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## **“GET NUTS FOR CLEAN WATER”**

Thousands of Volunteers to Collect Seeds During October  
for Future Forests and Healthy Potomac River

SILVER SPRING, MD. – This October marks the fourth annual *Growing Native*, a seed collection program that makes it easy for people to do their part for healthy forests and rivers in the Potomac River region. Last year, more than 7,000 volunteers of all ages collected upwards of 18,800 pounds of seeds. These seeds are growing into more than 1.5 million trees that will be planted along rivers and streams across the region. This year, even more people are expected to get even more “nuts for clean water.”

“The state of our streamside lands is the most important factor affecting the quality of our waters,” says Matthew Logan, President of the Potomac Conservancy, the conservation organization that coordinates *Growing Native*. “By supplying seedlings to restore degraded forests along our rivers and streams, *Growing Native* supports one of the most effective measures we can take to protect the waters on which we all depend for our health and enjoyment.”

This October, thousands of people will do their part to comb the ground for acorns, walnuts, and other native tree seeds. The Potomac Conservancy is spreading the word that citizens can take action just steps from their back or front door.

“Getting involved has never been easier,” says Bryan Seipp, the Potomac Conservancy’s *Growing Native* coordinator. “If you’re already raking up acorns as part of your annual yard duties, don’t put them on the curb. All you have to do is take them to your local drop-off site, and they’ll become the trees of future streamside forests.”

According to Seipp, who is a licensed forester, you should separate different kinds of seeds into different bags, including one leaf from the tree inside of each bag to help foresters identify the seeds if you cannot. Tree identification keys are available at [www.growingnative.org](http://www.growingnative.org), giving you the opportunity to become more familiar with the trees in your community. Seipp urges that collectors not use plastic bags because they speed rot, but instead recommends paper, dry weave, or burlap bags, which are readily available at hardware stores. Seeds should be kept cool and dry until you deliver them to your local drop-off site. All drop-off sites are equipped with seed identification tags that Seipp encourages individuals to attach to their bags if you know what kind of seeds you collected.

Drop-off locations dot the Potomac River region and most will be accepting seed from now through October 31. Some drop-offs will be at one-day community events, where you can meet *Growing Native* representatives who have extensive tree knowledge and

plenty of collection bags for you to take home. For a complete list of drop-off sites, visit [www.growingnative.org](http://www.growingnative.org).

If you don't have a yard or trees, many parks across the region will allow individuals to collect on their grounds at any time. A comprehensive list of approved public collection sites is available online.

The Potomac Conservancy is also encouraging citizens to involve their community groups, schools, and businesses in *Growing Native*. Register your group online and the Potomac Conservancy will mail you a site leader kit. This kit includes everything you'll need for a successful event: a *Growing Native* banner, a detailed site leader manual, tree identification sheets, collection bags, and seed identification tags.

While many individuals are already getting involved in their own backyards, group collections will also take place throughout October in public places such as schoolyards and national landmarks like the National Cathedral (Wash., D.C.). Ford and Lincoln-Mercury, sponsors of *Growing Native* for the third consecutive year, plan to involve their employees by hosting a seed collection. Schoolteachers across the region are integrating *Growing Native* into their curricula, empowering students to positively impact their communities. Some are developing weeklong science and math lessons; others are creating on-campus nurseries grown from the seeds, carrying learning into the spring.

Seeds collected by volunteers are donated to Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania state nurseries, where they are nurtured into seedlings that are returned to our communities in one to two years as streamside forests. These trees keep our waters cleaner because their roots act as sponges, absorbing pollutants before they wash off the land and reducing soil erosion. The trees also provide wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and cleaner air.

If you can't get enough of *Growing Native* this fall, you can "get your hands dirty for clean water" next spring by taking part in tree plantings in your area. After collecting seeds and planting trees, the Potomac Conservancy hopes that participants walk away with a better understanding of the full circle of seeds, trees, and clean water.

To learn more about how you, your community group, or your school can "Get Nuts for Clean Water" this October, visit [www.growingnative.org](http://www.growingnative.org) or call the Potomac Conservancy's *Growing Native* coordinator at 301.608.1188, x207.

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*Growing Native* is coordinated by the Potomac Conservancy on behalf of the Potomac Watershed Partnership. Since its inception in 2001, more than 10,000 volunteers have dedicated nearly 30,000 hours to collect 45,000 pounds of seed—enough to generate nearly 3 million trees. For more than ten years, the Potomac Conservancy has been protecting the health, beauty, and enjoyment of the Potomac River and its tributaries. The Potomac Watershed Partnership is a large-scale restoration project to protect and restore the forests of the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:  
APPROACHING SEED COLLECTIONS & COLORFUL PHOTO OPP'S**

**Cabin John, Md.: Cabin John Regional Park, Friday, October 15, 9 am.** Ford and Lincoln-Mercury, sponsors of *Growing Native* for the third consecutive year, will host a collection of pin and white oak seeds. More than forty volunteers will participate, including Ford and Lincoln-Mercury employees and Sidwell Friends middle school students. *Growing Native* representatives will talk with participants about the relevance of their seed collection to the water quality of streams, like the one flowing right nearby.

**Arlington, Va.: Potomac Overlook Regional Park, Saturday, October 24.** Upwards of 20 Cub Scouts and volunteers with Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment will collect black walnuts and acorns.

**Potomac, Md.: The Bullis School, October 25.** Twelfth graders will lead third through fifth graders in a seed collection on the 80-acre wooded grounds of this preparatory school.

**Washington, DC: National Cathedral School, Saturday, October 30.** *Growing Native* coordinator Bryan Seipp will lead elementary students in a seed collection on the grounds of this historic landmark.

***To learn more about these and other upcoming seed collections in your area or to arrange interviews with Growing Native spokespersons, contact Jen Schill (see above).***