



# THE UNDERSTORY INITIATIVE

[understoryinitiative.org](http://understoryinitiative.org)

## ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2023



*Program Accomplishments of 2023 and  
what to look forward to as we enter 2024!*

# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I reflect on this past year, one idea – **decadence** – rises to the top. Although the term “decadence” has negative connotations when used by some land managers (for example, to refer to an unmanaged forest), ecologists know that it’s precisely those qualities – maturity, abundance and something a little “extra” – that create quality habitat to support biodiversity.

How can we approach the challenge of habitat restoration with the idea of “**decadence**” at the forefront? To me, decadence means restoring both landscapes and human communities. It means embracing the ever-changing complexity, beauty, painful scars, challenging realities, unknowns, and surprises inherent in ecological systems and intentionally crafting thoughtful responses that mirror this so-called decadence. And it means doing a little extra – even if it’s not in our grant budgets – to make all of it happen.

If you are inclined toward the decadent approach, consider donating to The Understory Initiative at some point this year. It’s the community support that allows us to approach our work with the goal of decadent restoration success – not just checking a box for “acres restored”. Thank you!



Kathryn Prive, Executive Director  
Sean Prive, Ecologist  
Avery Prive, all-things-in-training

## We are innovators in seed-based restoration.



“In 2023, we started to feel some “lift-off” in accomplishing our mission of restoring native plant communities using locally produced seed. It’s an effort that requires our entire 10-person team and then some! Our Pollinator Mix, which is produced locally and provided to landowners through TUI’s Monarchs & Pollinators Initiative, is a great example of that. And it’s catching: Now other restoration practitioners get in touch with us to develop their own pollinator mixes.”

TUULA REBHAWN  
SEED PARTNERSHIPS AND OPERATIONS MANAGER



Staff Photo: Vanessa, Tuula, Stasie, Jeanine, Maggie, Kathryn, Sean & Henry (Kyle & Morgan not present)

## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

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Kathy Kellerman and Kevin Talbert have been elected to serve as the new TUI Board Chair and Vice-Chair. Kathy and Kevin joined the Board in 2022 and are enthusiastic supporters of the important work TUI Staff and volunteers do to restore and conserve native habitats.

## OUR MISSION

To facilitate the restoration and conservation of native species habitat through partnership and community engagement.

- **Restoration Planning**
  - **Vegetation Monitoring**
  - **Seed Collection**
  - **Rare Plant Monitoring**
  - **Planting & Seeding**
  - **Partnership Building**
- 

## SUPPORT TUI

Kathryn Prive and Co. have been busy making beautiful earrings from wild native seeds. Uniquely handcrafted and sustainably sourced too!



[Available on Etsy Here](#)

## VESPER MEADOW: SEASONS IN ART 2024 CALENDAR

Featuring local  
Vesper Meadow  
Artists-in-  
Partnership!  
[Order here.](#)



Jeanine Moy, Vesper Meadow Education Program Director and Stasie Maxwell, Indigenous Partnership Programs Manager

## 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

**Published** a Fire Ecology Curriculum with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and held

**2**

curriculum-training workshops for educators.

**Built**

**20**

low-tech structures along Latgawa Creek and Spencer Creek in partnership with Project Beaver

**Received**

**700**

volunteer hours from our community members, a benefit to the land AND its inhabitants.

VESPER  MEADOW  
EDUCATION PROGRAM



We also piloted programming for **Healing Landscapes**, which centers **Indigenous Worldview**, local Native communities and **BIPOC youth and families**



**In 2024, we look forward to continuing the Mardon Skipper habitat restoration work on the Meadow.**



Kyle Poling, Botany Technician & Native Seed Farm Manger

At the OSU Extension farm plot, we had very successful harvests of annual species that we tried growing for the first time, including *Clarkia purpurea* sourced from Table Rocks (left) and *Hemizonia congesta* from the Little Butte Creek watershed.



## RESTORATION SERVICES



In 2023 we put out almost 100 lbs of seed on prepped restoration sites through TUI's Monarchs & Pollinators Initiative



Through regional partnerships like KSON, TUI provides crucial understory plant community data that will inform land-management decisions for decades to come.

**In 2024 we are looking forward to strategizing our Restoration Services focal area to build off the work being done in Partnership Building and Ecological Research & Monitoring.**



The **Solar Energy and Pollinators Initiative** looks into innovative methods for creating pollinator habitat beneath solar panels. In 2023 we saw a camas superbloom at this local solar installation!



Several staff traveled to western Idaho to monitor the rare McFarlane's four-o'clock.

## RESEARCH & MONITORING

“We are finally at a point where we have four years of plant community data for some of our projects, and we can start to analyze it to figure out what is going on in an ecological sense. That’s what’s really exciting to me.” ~Henry Whitridge, Ecologist

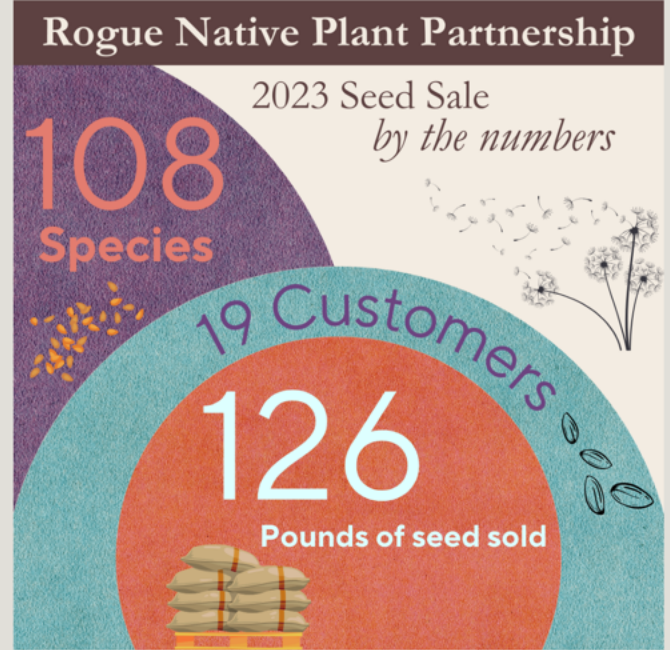
In 2023, we expanded our research and restoration projects in coastal dune ecosystems. Read more from our farm partners at [East Fork Cultivars](#).

Vanessa Robertson-Rojas. Ecologist and Private Lands Stewardship Director



**The Rare Plant Monitoring Network has a new partnership with Siskiyou Chapter of the Native Plant Society for 2024, getting more volunteers outdoors looking at rare plants!**

In 2023 we received **162 hours** of volunteer support with seed collection, with an extra focus on cleaning seeds at the Selberg Institute. We are working toward being a financially self-sustaining group and the annual seed sale helped get us there!



**Seed inventory database:** After visioning and scoping for a new system to help us keep better track of seeds – from wild collection to grow-out to restoration implementation – we received an offer to use an industry-standard seed tracking database (Proceed) free of charge. We accepted!

RNPP Co-Coordinator Kathryn and Tuula attended the National Native Seed Conference in Washington, DC, to present about Native Seed Partnerships across Oregon.

**In 2024 we look forward to nerding out with our new seed database, reducing our admin time so we can spend more time collecting & cleaning seed!**



Umpqua Native Plant Partnership



Over 100 native seed collections, 10 lbs of wild seed, and 400 hours of volunteer support. Thank You!

The Umpqua Native Plant Partnership found its wings in 2023! Partnership Coordinator and Restoration Ecologist Morgan Fay launched a Native Plant Material program, to produce a first-ever pollinator seed mixes specific to the wet/dry and hot/dry site conditions of the Umpqua for low to high elevation sites.

The UNPP MOU and 5-year Strategic Plan are complete and have been widely accepted across the partnership. Official signing to take place in January 2024.

**Supporting local producers to grow seed, plugs, and cuttings to support ecological restoration projects in the Umpqua!!!**







# TUI OPEN HOUSE

November 7-12, 2023  
Watch Landowner Presentation





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***Thank you for your continued support and  
from our heart to yours we wish you a  
Happy New Year & many more!!***

