

A lush garden scene featuring a pond in the background, surrounded by dense green foliage and trees. In the foreground, there are vibrant pink and purple flowers, possibly hydrangeas, growing along the edge of the pond. The water reflects the surrounding greenery. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

Nurturing Nature: Data-Driven Ecology At Mt. Cuba Center

About Mt. Cuba

- Located in Hockessin, Delaware, 30 miles SW of Philadelphia
- Built in 1935 on a fallow hilltop, it was a family home until Pamela Copeland's death in 2001
- Opened for general admission in 2013

Founding Intention

"I want this to be a place where people will learn to appreciate our native plants and to see how these plants can enrich their lives so that they, in turn, will become conservators of our natural habitats."

- Pamela Copeland

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Nature-Based

Solutions

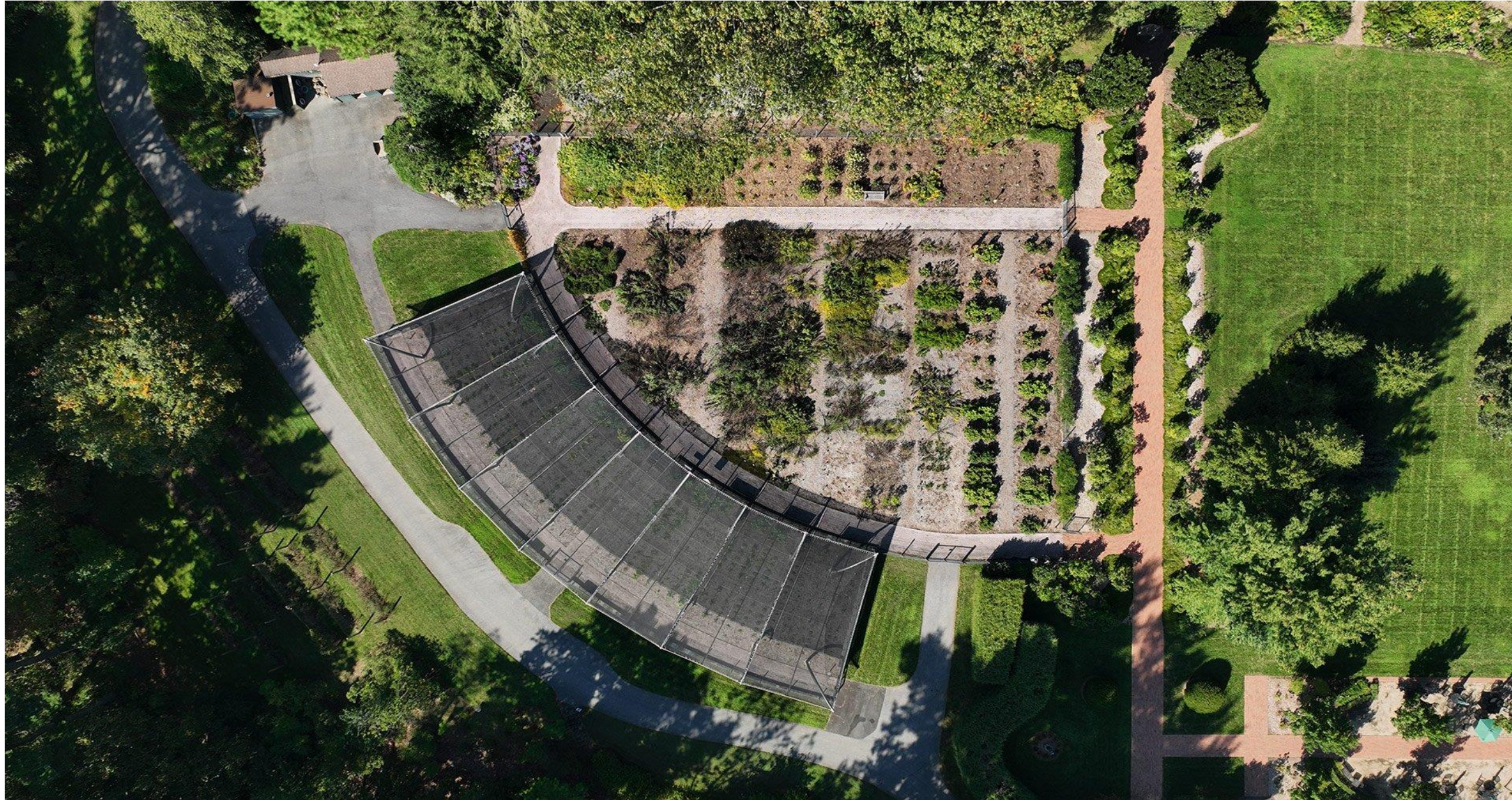
At the intersection of horticulture and conservation:

- Increasing Native Plant Availability
- When does “local” matter?

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Trial Garden Research



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<https://mtcubacenter.org/research/trial-garden>

Trial Garden Research

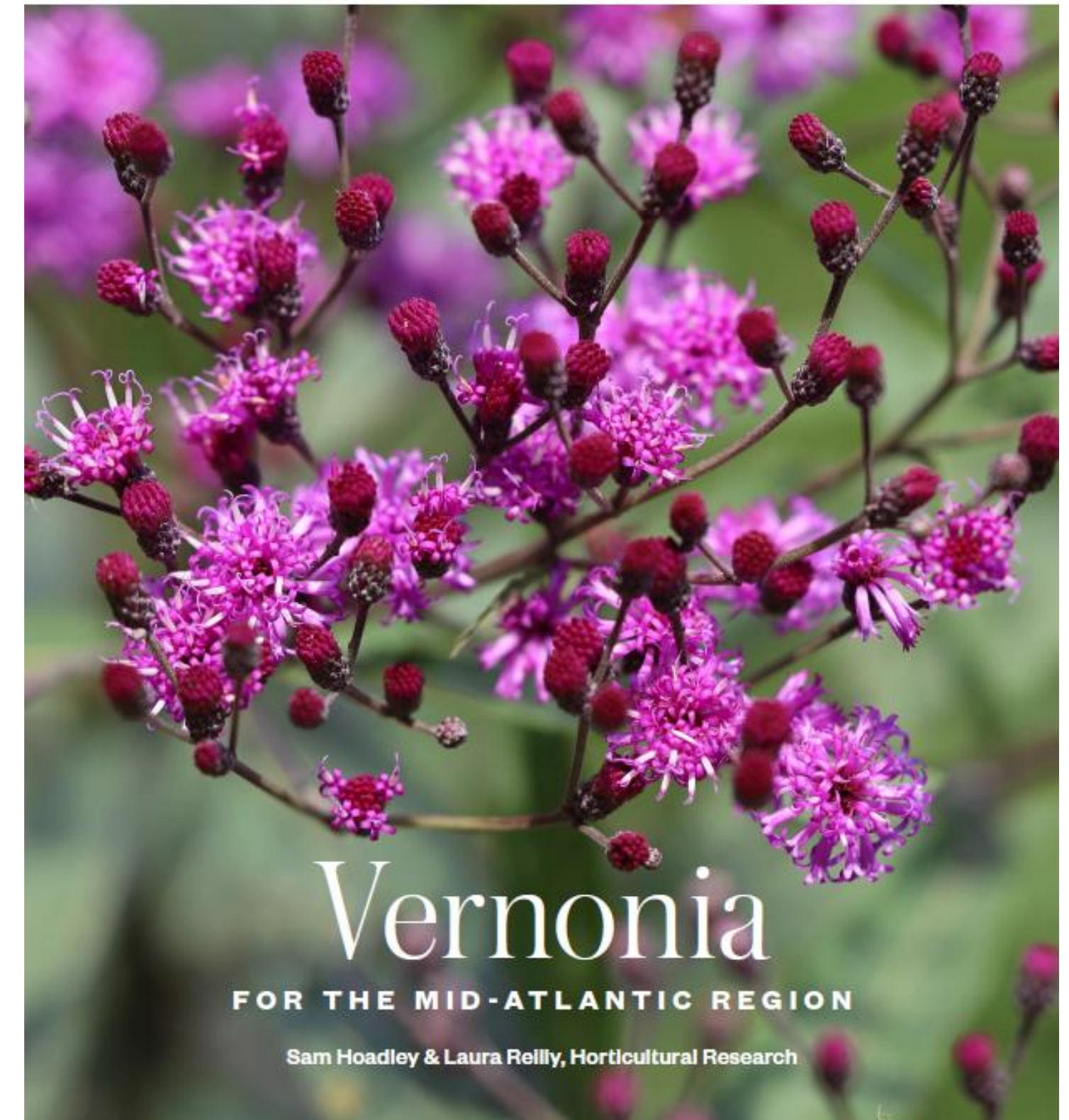
- Aster
 - Echinacea
 - Heuchera
 - Coreopsis
 - Baptisia
 - Monarda
 - Phlox
 - Helenium
 - Echinacea (again)
 - Wild Hydrangea
 - Carex
 - Amsonia
 - Vernonia
- In Progress**
- Solidago (Jan. 2026)
 - Oak Leaf Hydrangea
 - Pycnanthemum
 - Asclepias
 - Ferns
 - Tiarella
 - Bluestems

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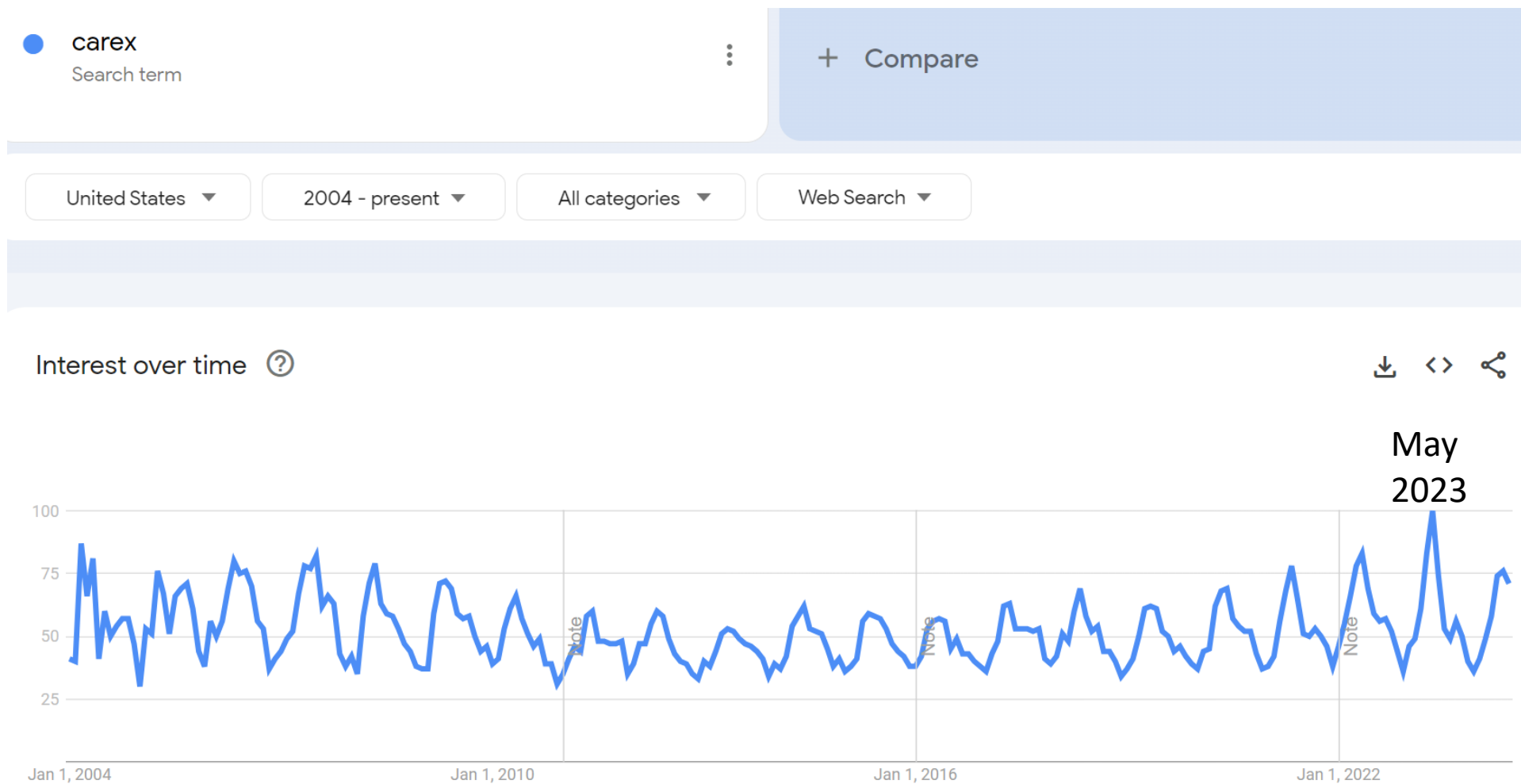
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Carex

Published December 2022

Google Trends data

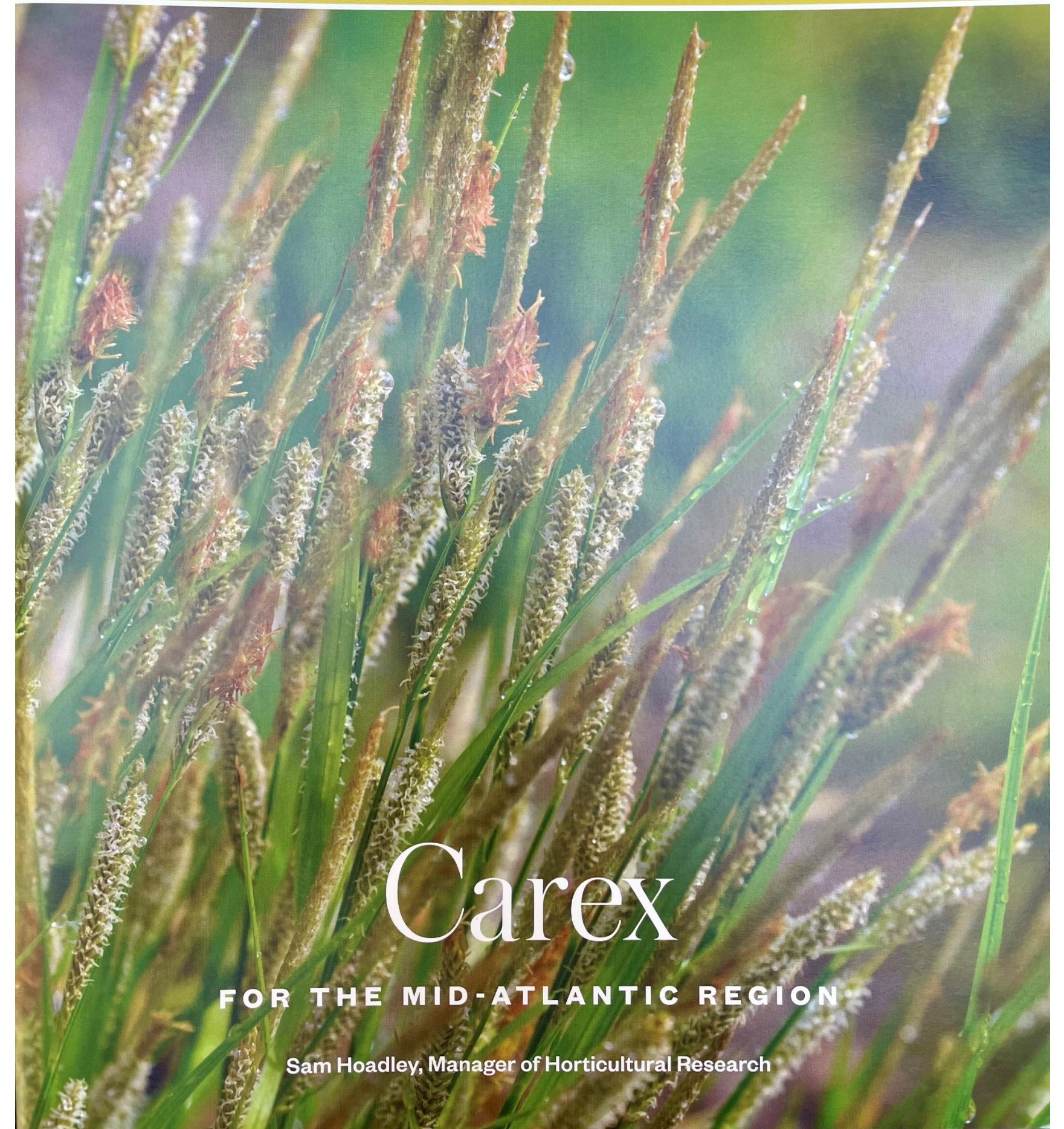


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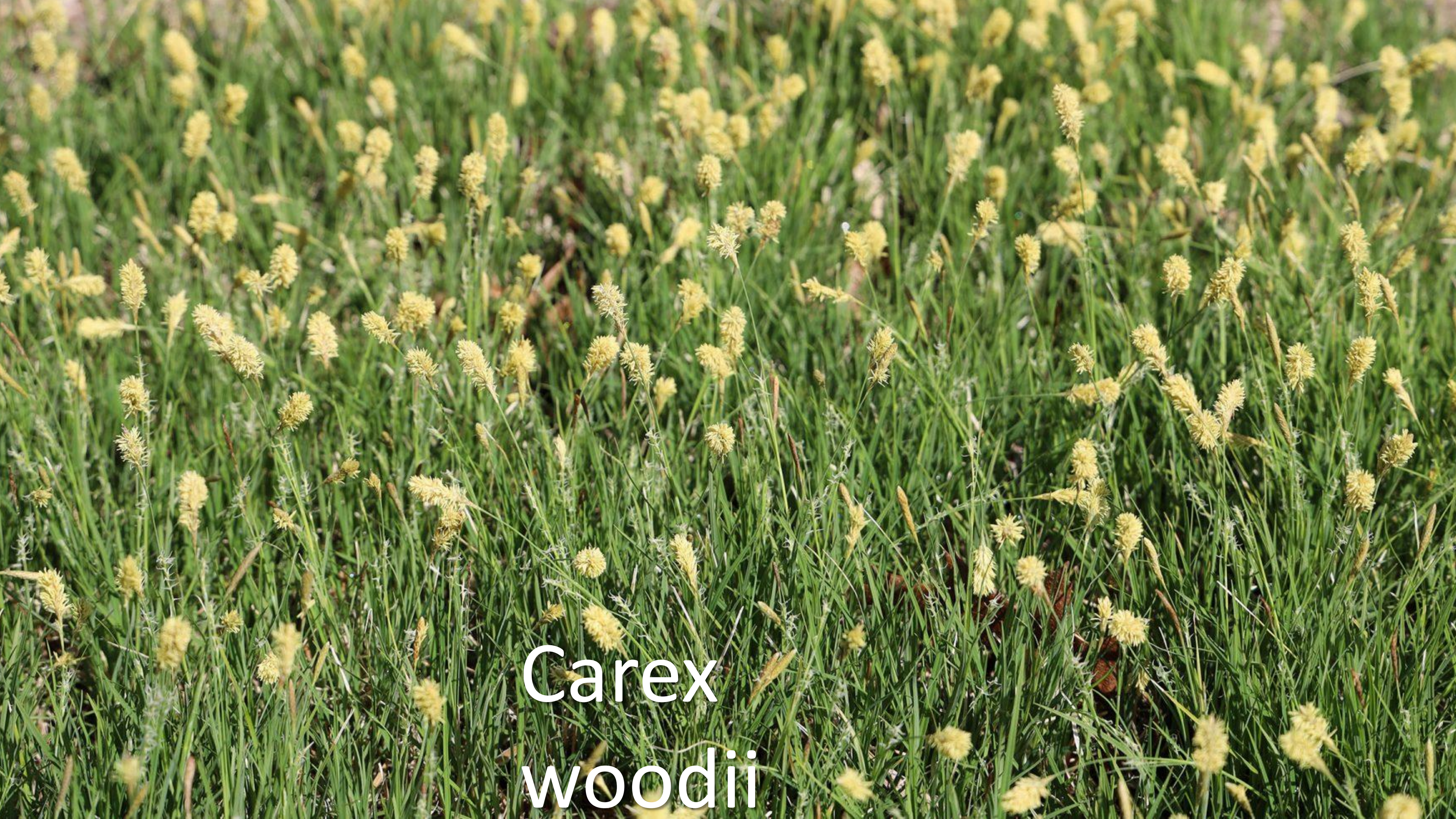
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Carex

FOR THE MID-ATLANTIC REGION

Sam Hoadley, Manager of Horticultural Research

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a dense field of Carex woodii. The plants consist of numerous thin, green grass-like leaves and many upright, slender stems. Each stem is topped with a small, elongated, yellowish-brown flower spike. The overall appearance is a lush, textured carpet of green with scattered yellow highlights. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day, and the background is softly out of focus.

Carex
woodii

Solidago - Goldenrod

- 6 of 12 top performing selections are straight species that are currently unavailable in the nursery trade.
- 42 specialist bee species rely on solidago.
- Mt. Cuba is working with wholesale nurseries to get these high-performing species into commercial production.



Solidago gigantea

(smooth goldenrod)

- Material in the trial was originally collected in northern Delaware
- Rhizomatous
- Tall (6-7') with upright habit, good floral display
- Blooms in July and August

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Solidago fistulosa

(pine barrens goldenrod)

- Material in the trial originally collected in southern Delaware
- Excellent habit, disease resistance, floral display, and fall color
- Blooms in September and early October

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Seed-grown species are suitable for conservation setting



Mt. Cuba Pollinator Meadow Study

Species Desired = 100
Species Sourced = 38



Conservation practitioners often make do with the seeds they can find.

How often does your agency substitute native seed or plant materials having different characteristics when your preferred natives are not available?

Native seed or plant material of different species?

Frequently: 41.9%

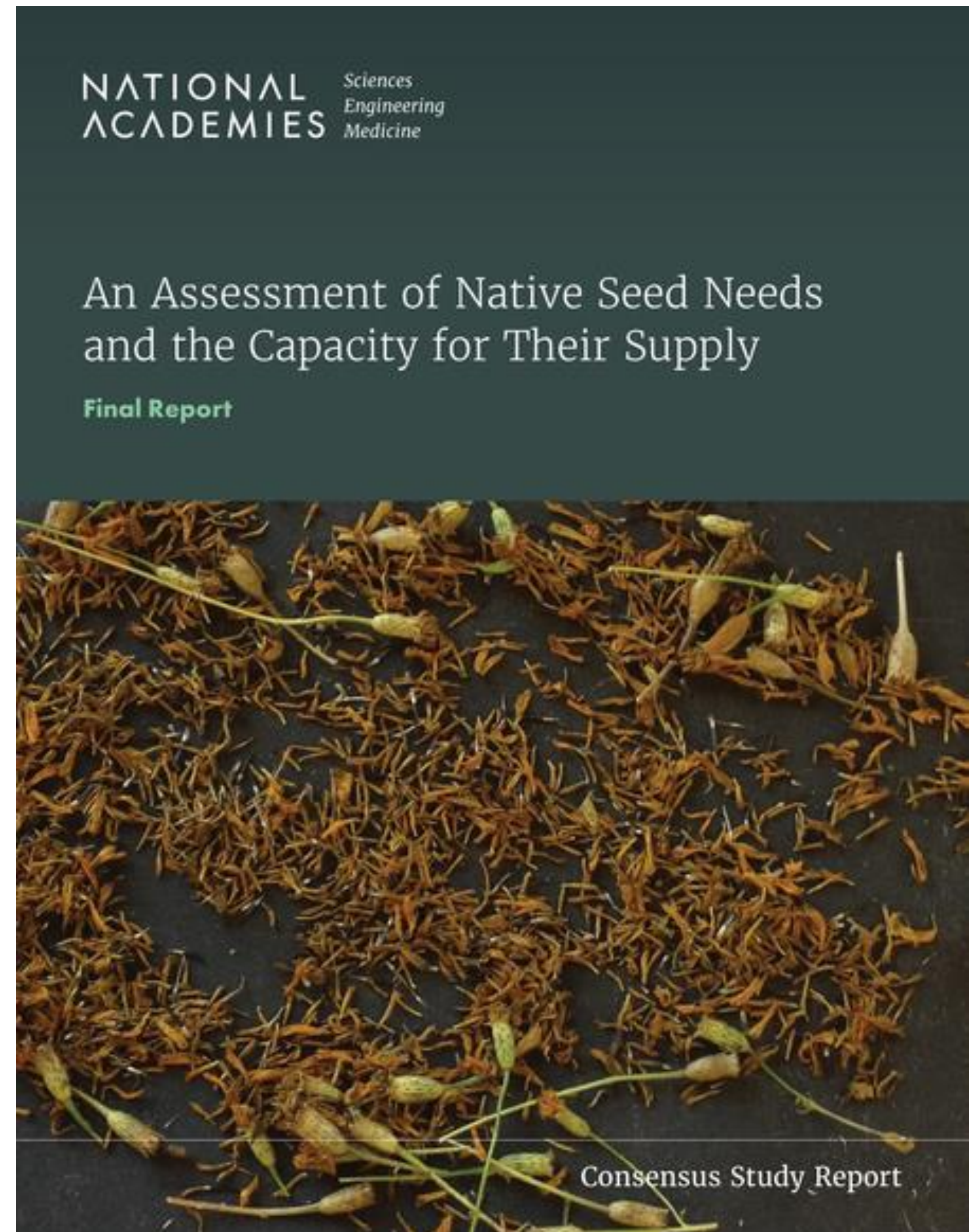
Infrequently: 51.2%

Native seed or plant material from a different region?

Frequently: 29.1%

Infrequently: 59.3%

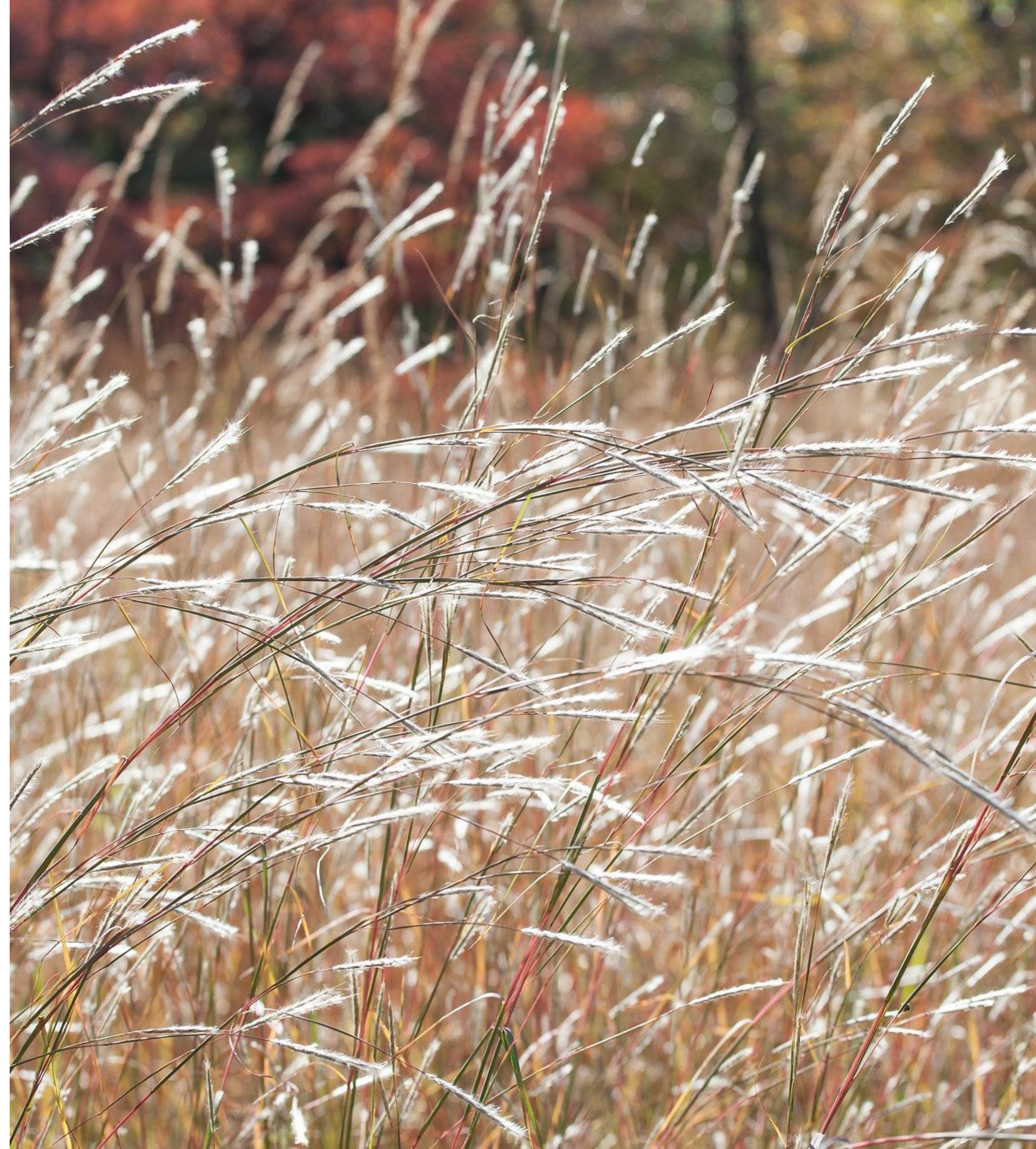
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Bluestems for the Mid-Atlantic Region

- Includes approximately 40 *Andropogon* and 30 *Schizachyrium* species and cultivars
- These plants will be evaluated for their beauty and for their adaptability to average garden conditions
- Report Scheduled for 2029/2030

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Bluestem Straight Species Sourced From:

New Jersey
Northern Delaware (Piedmont)
Southern Delaware (Coastal Plain)
Virginia
Alabama
Missouri



A person wearing a light-colored shirt and a hat is walking away from the camera through a field of tall, green grass and wildflowers. The field is filled with various plants, including tall yellow flowers and purple spikes. In the background, there is a dense forest of green trees. The scene is bright and sunny, with sunlight filtering through the leaves.

Species that are less ecotypically sensitive can be mass produced for wider distribution.

When should we break the rules?