

Native Plant Needs Assessment Survey of Nursery and Landscape Professionals

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Introduction

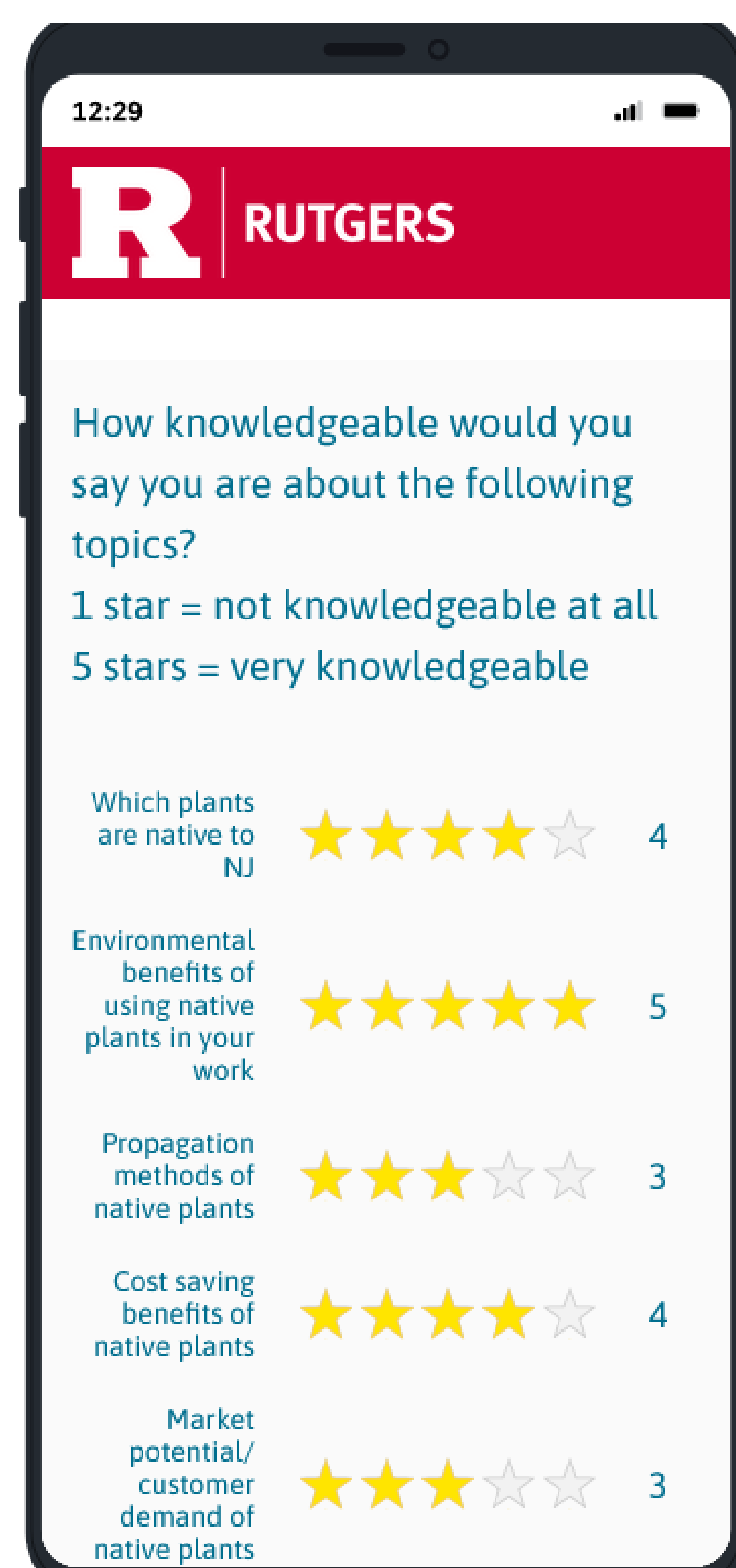
Native plants are becoming increasingly popular choices for low-input ornamental landscapes in residential and commercial applications. However, there are currently several barriers to increased wide-spread adoption of native plants at the production level. Many nurseries and independent garden centers in New Jersey are currently growing or offering at least some native plants in response to this increasing demand. However, supplies are still limited and there are specific best management practices associated with growing, marketing, and maintaining native plants that need further development. To determine which priorities were most important to the green industry in New Jersey, Rutgers Cooperative Extension developed and disseminated a state-wide native plant needs assessment survey.

Objectives

1. To assess the needs of the NJ nursery and landscape industry regarding Extension programming related to native plants
2. To determine the current stakeholder knowledge base on native plants
3. To identify which native plant topics are the highest priorities for Extension programming

Materials and Methods

- An online survey was developed in Qualtrics and sent to green industry stakeholders.
- The survey included 22 questions and took approximately 5 minutes to complete.
- Questions included:
 - the size and type of operation
 - their current knowledge of native plants
 - percent of their operation currently dedicated to growing native plants
 - perceived customer demand for natives
 - their interest in expanding their native plant offerings
 - what specific information would be most useful to increase their production and sales of native plants



Results

Responses from 44 commercial nursery and landscape professionals were received (N=44)

Nurseries ranged in size from 1.2 to 3,000 acres

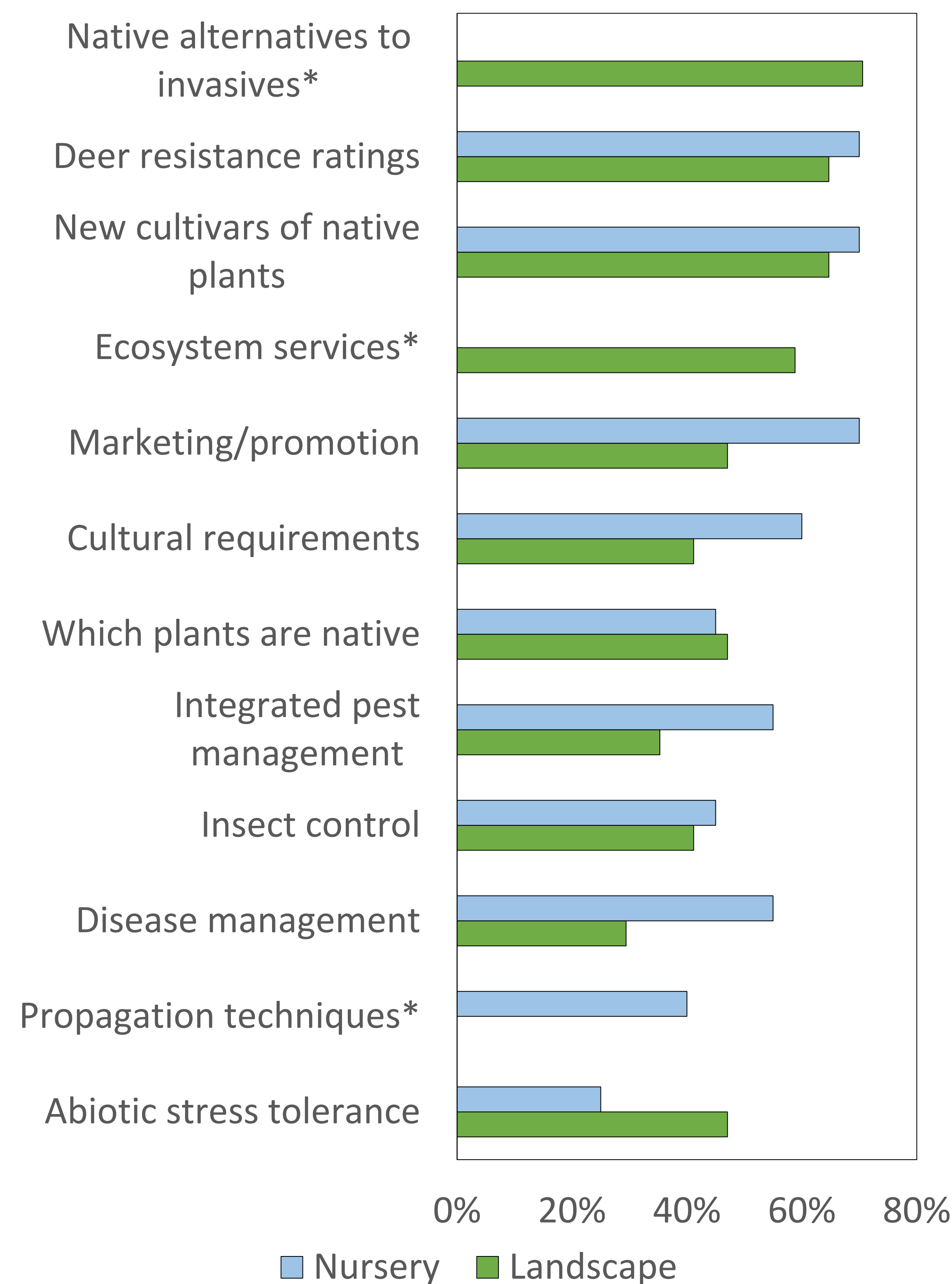
Managed landscapes ranged in size from 5 to 640 acres

Interested in increasing native plant production

100% of nursery growers (n=15)

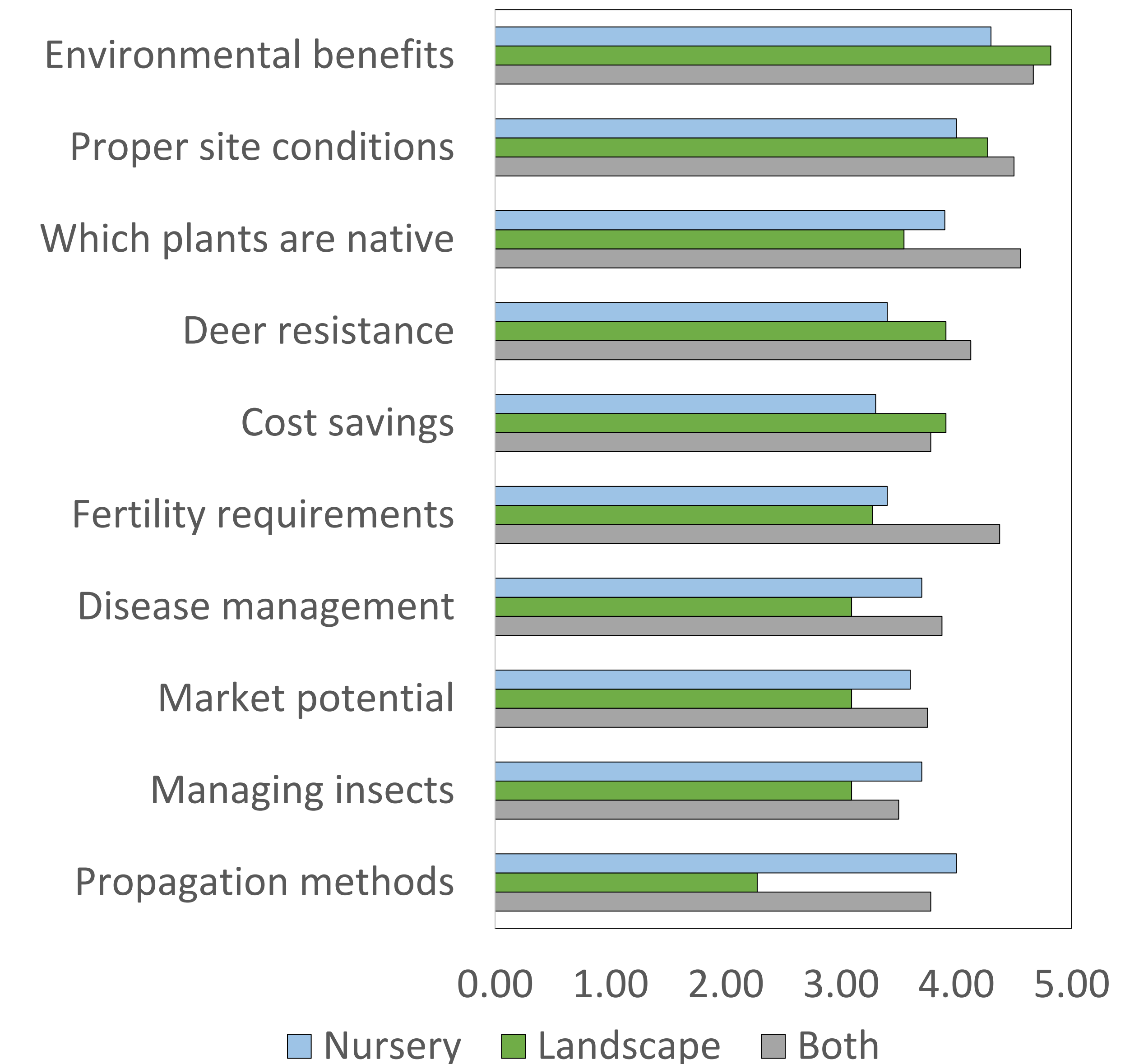
88% of landscapers (n=16)

Top Priorities for Native Plant Extension Programming



Percent of respondents who indicated each topic was a high priority for Native Plant Extension Programming. *indicates only one group asked about that topic. Landscape Professionals (n=17). Nursery Growers (n=20).

Knowledge of Native Plant Topics



Responses on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating not knowledgeable at all, and 5 indicating very knowledgeable. Nursery (n=11); Landscape (n=11); Both (n=8).

Discussion & Conclusions

- Survey responses from stakeholders indicated native alternatives to invasive species, deer resistant native plants, and new cultivars of native plants were among the highest priorities for Extension programming.
- Knowledge gaps in native plant propagation methods, managing insects, market potential, and disease management were identified.
- Based on this direction from stakeholders, Extension programming can be developed to effectively meet these needs to support the green industry in their production and marketing of native plants.

