Prunella vulgaris

Prunella vulgaris
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Contact the photographer

Prunella vulgaris
Photo - Walter Wilson

Species

Self-heal, all-heal, heal-all, Brunella (*Prunella vulgaris*)

"Fibrous-rooted perennial from a short rhizome or stem-base; stems solitary or clustered, erect to spreading or even reclining, leafy, square in cross-section, usually unbranched, 10-50 cm long or tall.
Leaves [are] opposite, relatively few, lance-egg-shaped to oblong or elliptic, minutely hairy to hairless, stalked; [leaf] margins smooth or obscurely toothed.
Flowers [are] purplish to pink [...], 1-2 cm long, short-stalked; sepals united in a 2-lipped, spine-tipped tube; petals fused into 2-lipped tube, upper lip hooded and bonnet-like, lower lip 3 lobed (the middle lobe fringed); 4 stamens; 4-lobed ovary; numerous in dense, spike-like cluster atop the stem.**"** [5]

"Self-heal apparently consists of native plants (ssp. *lanceolata*) and introduced plants from Eurasia (ssp. *vulgaris*). The species now occurs on all continents.**"** [5]

Range

Widespread.

NORTH to Alaska, EAST to Maine/Newfoundland and SOUTH to North Carolina, Kansas, New Mexico, and California. [6]

Climate, elevation

USDA zones 04a-09b [1], [3]

Sea level to 1,720 meters. [6]

Local occurrence

Common.

Forest edges; outer, raised margins of wetlands (less common); vernal wetlands; south Puget Sound prairies; meadows; fields; and clearings. [5], [6]

Habitat preferences

Mesic to dry roadsides; waste places; lawns; fields and open forests in the lowland, steppe and montane zones. [5], [6]

Plant strategy type/successional stage

Weed/colonizer, can be seral at many successional stages, or part of a climax community (such as a south Puget Sound prairie).

Associated species

- *Abies grandis*
- *Pseudotsuga menziesii*
- *Tsuga heterophylla*
- *Thuja plicata*
- *Alnus rubra*
- *Acer macrophyllum*
- *Acer circinatum*
- *Quercus garryana*
- *Agrostis scabra*
- *Elymus glaucus*

- *Festuca idahoensis*
- *Fragraria virginiana*
- *Fragraria vesca*
- *Potentilla palustris*
- *Rosa nootkana*
- *Rosa pisocarpa*
- *Physocarpus capitatus*
- *Gaultheria shallon*
- *Holodiscus discolor*
- *Salix spp.*
- *Amelanchier alnifolia*
- *Symphoricarpos albus*
- *Daucus carota*

May be collected as:

- Dried flower heads (four nutlets/seeds per head)
- Division
- Rooted stolons
- Direct removal for transplanting

Collection restrictions or guidelines

Prunella vulgaris is a perennial herbaceous plant that blooms from June through October. Division can occur any time plants are found. In a mild climate, division can take place any time of the year.. Stolon collection can occur whenever rooting stolons can be found.

Seed collection is most easily accomplished by collecting flower heads at the end of their growing season (September, October, November).

Seed germination

Seeds can be sown on-site in densities that are varied according to desired germination and survival outcomes. [2], [3]

Plant mortality should be factored into any restoration project using *Prunella vulgaris* seeds on-site (in situ). [2]

When seeds are grown in greenhouses or cold frames, they are transplanted (approximately eight weeks [3]) when they are large enough to handle. [4]

Germination occurs within two to three weeks. [3]

Seed life

Seeds can be stored; I am unable to verify the shelf-life and storage conditions at present.

Recommended seed storage conditions

Unable to verify.

Propagation recommendations

Prunella vulgaris can be propagated by stolon, division, or seed. Propagation by stolon yields larger plants in a shorter amount of growing time. Stolons root wherever they touch soil.

Cold-stratify seeds for approximately one month. [3]

Seeds can be started in flats, and when the plants are large enough to handle (approximately eight weeks [3]) they can be transplanted into individual pots and grown to the desired size. Seeds may also be sown directly on site, preferably in late Fall to early Spring. [4]

Soil or medium requirements

Soil requirements are not exacting. [4] *Prunella vulgaris* will grow in sandy soil, volcanic ash soil, loamy soil, and clay soil. Soil moisture requirements range from an average of mesic to a maximum of hydric. [6] Once established, *Prunella vulgaris* can tolerate xeric conditions found late-season in Mediterranean climates. [7]

Installation form

Seeds can be sown on site, however the best strategy for a successful installation is to transplant plants with six or more leaves. [7]

Recommended planting density

Typical forest edge density is approximately three to ten plants per square meter at 800 meters elevation near Mount Rainier/White Pass (Washington State, US). Density is primarily dependent upon water availability, with higher plant densities found in areas with more soil moisture consistently available throughout the growing season. [7]

Around sunny forest edges where the soil is extremely well-drained (pumice and volcanic ash), three plants (groupings of plants approximately 10 cm across) per square meter is average. [7]

Care requirements after installed

Prunella vulgaris should not be allowed to dry-out during its first growing season. Soil should be kept barely moist to damp in partially-shaded plantings, and moist in full-sun plantings. It is best (in the Pacific NW) to plant during the winter rainy season. [7]

After plants are established, high soil moisture will cause increased (even weedy) growth. Established plants can tolerate extended dry periods [3] but do best when soil is consistently moist enough to prevent roots from

drying out.

Normal rate of growth or spread; lifespan

Highly variable growth rate. Under cultivation and ideal conditions (observed without the addition of any fertilizers), plants can spread approximately 45 cm in a growing season. In the grand fir (*Abies grandis*) forests near Mount Rainier plants typically spread up to 3 cm per growing season. [7]

Prunella vulgaris is a perennial that can remain evergreen in mild climates. [1], [5], [7]

A single plant may live from three to ten years. [1]

Plants spread most aggressively/primarily via stolons.

Sources cited

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Data compiled by

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