

## **Ecological site F043AP911MT Upland Warm Woodland Group**

Last updated: 9/09/2023  
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### **General information**

**Provisional.** A provisional ecological site description has undergone quality control and quality assurance review. It contains a working state and transition model and enough information to identify the ecological site.

### **MLRA notes**

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 043A–Northern Rocky Mountains

This MLRA is located in Montana (43 percent), Idaho (34 percent), and Washington (23 percent). It makes up about 31,435 square miles (81,460 square kilometers). It has no large cities or towns. It has many national forests, including the Okanogan, Colville, Kootenai, Lolo, Flathead, Coeur d'Alene, St. Joe, Clearwater, and Kaniksu National Forests.

This MLRA is in the Northern Rocky Mountains Province of the Rocky Mountain System. It is characterized by rugged, glaciated mountains; thrust- and block-faulted mountains; and hills and valleys. Steep-gradient rivers have cut deep canyons. Natural and manmade lakes are common.

The major Hydrologic Unit Areas (identified by four-digit numbers) that make up this MLRA are: Kootenai-Pend Oreille-Spokane (1701), 67 percent; Upper Columbia (1702), 18 percent; and Lower Snake (1706), 15 percent. Numerous rivers originate in or flow through this area, including, the Sanpoil, Columbia, Pend Oreille, Kootenai, St. Joe, Thompson, and Flathead Rivers.

This area is underlain primarily by stacked slabs of layered sedimentary or metasedimentary bedrock. The bedrock formations range from Precambrian to Cretaceous in age. The rocks consist of shale, sandstone, siltstone, limestone, argillite, quartzite, gneiss, schist, dolomite, basalt, and granite. The formations have been faulted and stacked into a series of imbricate slabs by regional tectonic activity. Pleistocene glaciers carved a rugged landscape that includes sculpted hills and narrow valleys filled with till and outwash. Continental glaciation overrode the landscape in the northern half of the MLRA while glaciation in the southern half was confined to montane settings.

The average annual precipitation is 25 to 60 inches (635 to 1,525 millimeters) in most of this area, but it is as much as 113 inches (2,870 millimeters) in the mountains and is 10 to 15 inches (255 to 380 millimeters) in the western part of the area. Summers are dry. Most of the precipitation during fall, winter, and spring is snow. The average annual temperature is 32 to 51 degrees F (0 to 11 degrees C) in most of the area, decreasing with elevation. In most of the area, the freeze-free period averages 140 days and ranges from 65 to 215 days. It is longest in the low valleys of Washington, and it decreases in length with elevation. Freezing temperatures occur every month of the year on high mountains, and some peaks have a continuous cover of snow and ice.

The dominant soil orders in this MLRA are Andisols, Inceptisols, and Alfisols. Many of the soils are influenced by Mount Mazama ash deposits. The soils in the area have a frigid or cryic soil temperature regime; have an ustic, xeric, or udic soil moisture regime; and dominantly have mixed mineralogy. They are shallow to very deep, are very poorly drained to well drained, and have most of the soil texture classes. The soils at the lower elevations include Udivitrands, Vitrixerands and Haplustalfs. The soils at the higher elevations include Dystrocrypts, Eutrocrypts, Vitricryands, and Haplocryalfs. Cryorthents, Cryepts, and areas of rock outcrop are on ridges and peaks above timberline

This area is in the northern part of the Northern Rocky Mountains. Grand fir, Douglas-fir, western red cedar, western hemlock, western larch, lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, ponderosa pine, whitebark pine, and western white pine are the dominant overstory species, depending on precipitation, temperature, elevation, and landform aspect. The understory vegetation varies, also depending on climatic and landform factors. Some of the major wildlife species in this area are whitetailed deer, mule deer, elk, moose, black bear, grizzly bear, coyote, fox, and grouse. Fish, mostly in the trout and salmon families, are abundant in streams, rivers, and lakes.

More than one-half of this area is federally owned and administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. Much of the privately-owned land is controlled by large commercial timber companies. The forested areas are used for wildlife habitat, recreation, watershed, livestock grazing, and timber production. Meadows provide summer grazing for livestock and big game animals. Less than 3 percent of the area is cropland.

## Classification relationships

### ASSOCIATED HABITAT TYPES:

Major association with:

ponderosa pine/bitterbrush-Idaho fescue phase

Minor association with:

ponderosa pine/Idaho fescue-rough fescue phase

ponderosa pine/chokecherry

ponderosa pine/snowberry

ponderosa pine/snowberry-snowberry phase

## Ecological site concept

- Site does not receive additional water
- Dominant Cover: Coniferous Forest

The reference vegetation community has an overstory of ponderosa pine with a native bunchgrass understory with clumps of shrubs including bitterbrush, common snowberry and/or chokecherry. Understory species include (high to low occurrence): *Festuca campestris*, *Symphoricarpos albus*, *Pseudoroegneria spicata*, *Festuca idahoensis*, *Purshia tridentata*, *Spiraea betulifolia*, *Calamagrostis rubescens*, *Achnatherum hymenoides*, *Carex filifolia*, *Hesperostipa comata*, *Koeleria cristata*, *rosa* species, *Stipa Columbiana*, *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*, *Balsamorhiza sagittata*, *Amelanchier alnifolia*, *Carex geyeri*, *Linnaea borealis*, *Antennaria racemosa*. The understory production averages 710 dry pounds per acre (300-200) and is highly variable depending on site conditions.

- Soils are
  - o Generally not limy (limited extent)
  - o Moderately deep, deep, or very deep
  - o Not ashy or medial textural family
  - o Typically less than 5% stone and boulder surface cover (<15% max)
- Soil surface texture gravelly loam and gravelly silt loam in surface mineral 4"
- Parent material is glacial till, colluvium, alluvium
- Drainage class is well to excessively drained; no flooding frequency
- Site Landform: moraines, mountain slopes, outwash terraces, stream terraces
- Moisture Regime: xeric
- Temperature Regime: frigid
- Elevation Range: 2900-4600 ft
- Slope: 15-35%

## Associated sites

F043AP906MT	<b>Shallow Warm Woodland Group</b> Both sites reside in warm site condition areas that are in the xeric and frigid regimes (though F043AP906MT also includes ustic), in elevations of 2900 to 4600 feet (though F043AP906MT can go up to 5500 feet) and slopes of 15 to 35 percent (though F043AP906MT can have steeper slopes).
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## Similar sites

F043AP906MT	<b>Shallow Warm Woodland Group</b> These are similar sites in that they both reside in warm site conditions and have a reference community that is dominated by ponderosa pine in the overstory and the understory has warm adapted plants. The soils are differentiated by depth.
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**Table 1. Dominant plant species**

Tree	(1) <i>Pinus ponderosa</i> (2) <i>Juniperus scopulorum</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Symphoricarpos albus</i> (2) <i>Purshia tridentata</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Festuca idahoensis</i> (2) <i>Arnica sororia</i>

## Physiographic features

- Site Landform: moraines, mountain slopes, outwash terraces, stream terraces
- Elevation Range: 2900-4600 ft
- Slope: 15-35%

**Table 2. Representative physiographic features**

Landforms	(1) Mountains > Mountain slope (2) Mountains > Outwash terrace (3) Mountains > Stream terrace
Elevation	884–1,402 m
Slope	15–35%
Aspect	W, NW, N, NE, E, SE, S, SW

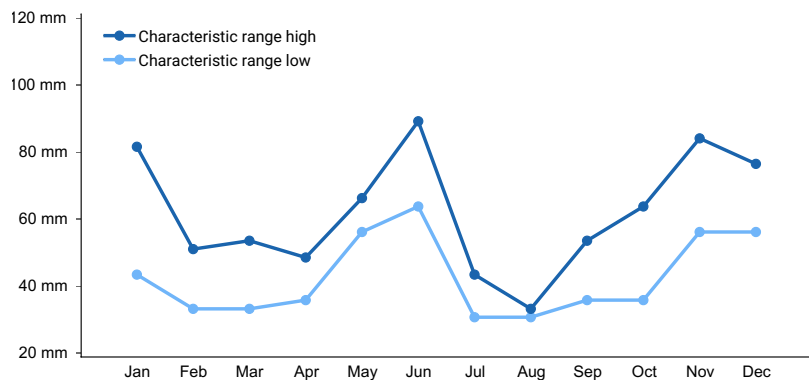
## Climatic features

- Moisture Regime: xeric
- Temperature Regime: frigid
- Representative Value (RV) of range of Mean Annual Precipitation: 16-24 inches
- Representative Value (RV) of range of Mean Average Annual Temperature: 39-45 degrees
- Representative Value (RV) of range of Frost Free Days: 75-105 days

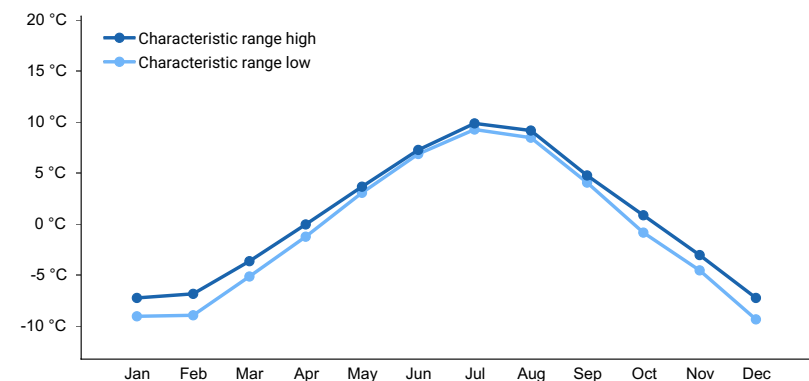
SUMMARY TABLES ARE FOR AVAILABLE CLIMATE STATIONS WHICH ARE ALL LOCATED IN VALLEYS.

**Table 3. Representative climatic features**

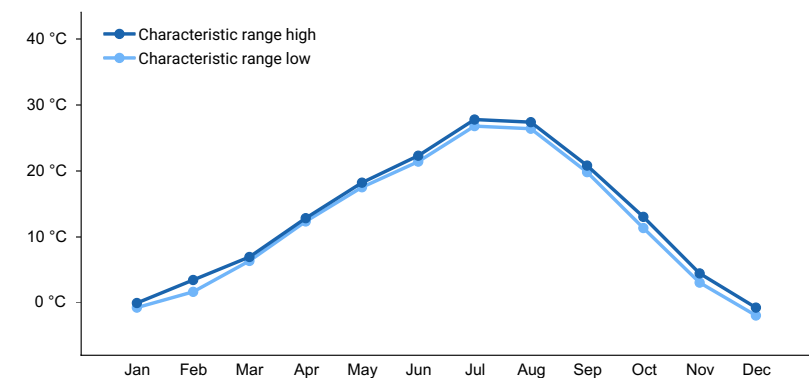
Frost-free period (characteristic range)	71-86 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	125-131 days
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	533-737 mm
Frost-free period (actual range)	70-87 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	123-132 days
Precipitation total (actual range)	483-813 mm
Frost-free period (average)	80 days
Freeze-free period (average)	128 days
Precipitation total (average)	610 mm



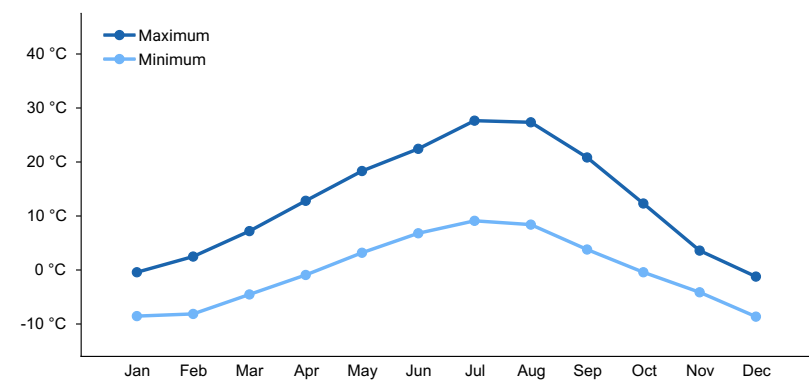
**Figure 1. Monthly precipitation range**



**Figure 2. Monthly minimum temperature range**



**Figure 3. Monthly maximum temperature range**



**Figure 4. Monthly average minimum and maximum temperature**

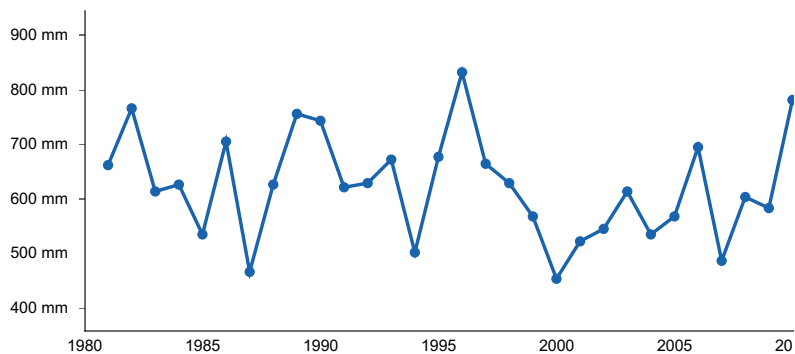


Figure 5. Annual precipitation pattern

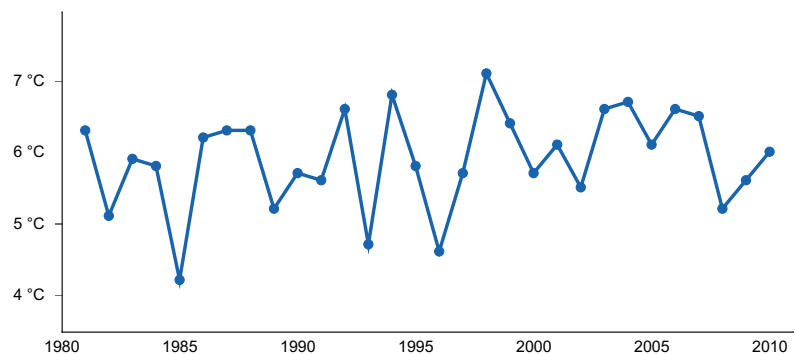


Figure 6. Annual average temperature pattern

### Climate stations used

- (1) POLEBRIDGE 1 N [USC00246618], Essex, MT
- (2) WEST GLACIER [USC00248809], Kalispell, MT
- (3) HUNGRY HORSE DAM [USC00244328], Kalispell, MT
- (4) WHITEFISH [USC00248902], Whitefish, MT
- (5) LINDBERGH LAKE [USC00245043], Seeley Lake, MT
- (6) LIBBY 1 NE RS [USC00245015], Libby, MT

### Influencing water features

- Site does not receive additional water
- NO WATER FEATURES

### Wetland description

DOES NOT APPLY

### Soil features

- Soils are
  - o Generally not limy (limited extent)
  - o Moderately deep, deep, or very deep
  - o Not ashy or medial textural family
  - o Typically less than 5% stone and boulder surface cover (<15% max)
- Soil surface texture gravelly loam and gravelly silt loam in surface mineral 4"
- Parent material is glacial till, colluvium, alluvium
- Drainage class is well to excessively drained; no flooding frequency

Table 4. Representative soil features

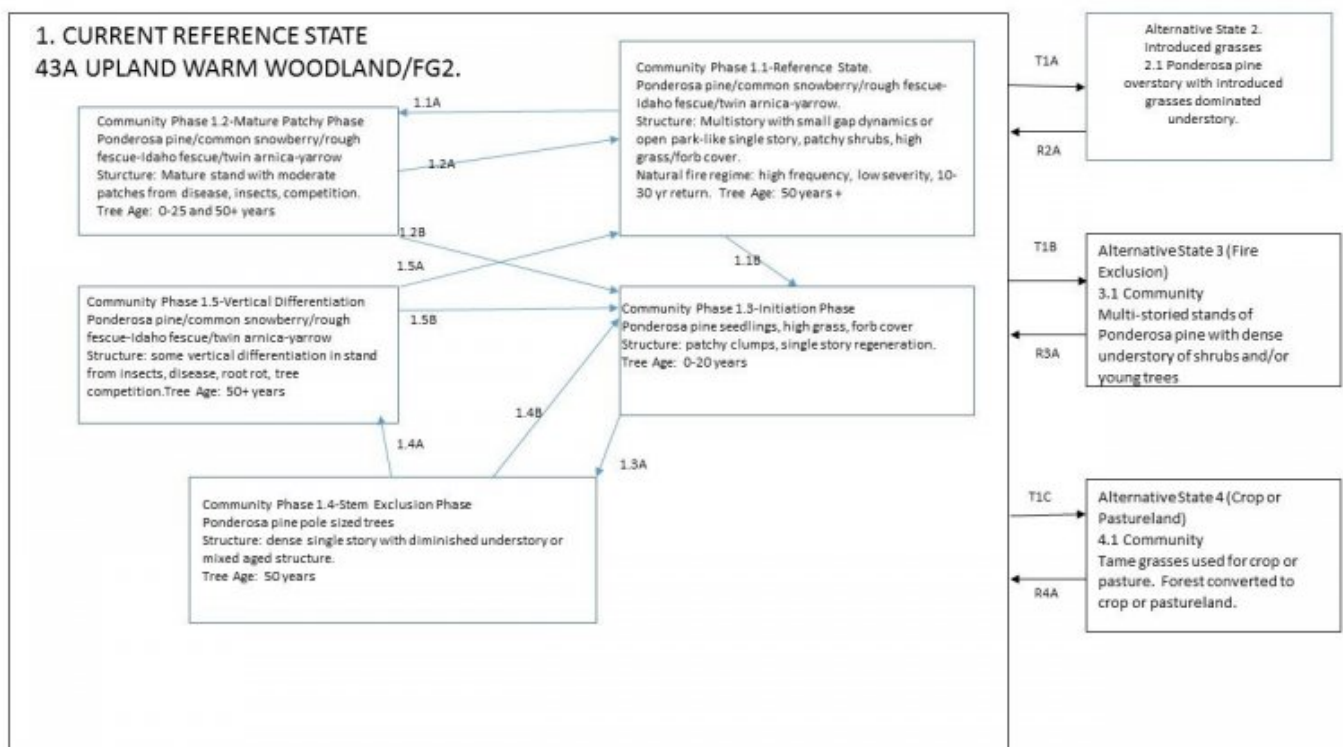
Parent material	(1) Till (2) Colluvium (3) Alluvium
Surface texture	(1) Gravelly loam (2) Gravelly silt loam
Drainage class	Well drained to excessively drained
Soil depth	51–152 cm

## Ecological dynamics

### Legend

- 1.1A – Moderate sized patches of tree mortality due to fire, insect, disease, windthrow.
- 1.1B – Stand replacement disturbance. Severe Fire or insect mortality killing large pine/fir.
- 1.2A – Time and infilling of moderate sized patches with trees to a reference stand of multistory stand.
- 1.2B – Stand replacement disturbance. Severe Fire or insect mortality killing large pine/fir, return to initiation phase.
- 1.3A – Time with fire return interval extended to allow natural tree regeneration to grow into dense pole stands
- 1.4A – Time without fire to allow vertical differentiation of stand through small gaps from death due to disease, insects, small fires, windthrow.
- 1.4B – Stand replacing severe fire that returns the stem exclusion phase forest to the initiation phase
- 1.5A – Time with no major disturbance to transition to the reference phase community
- 1.5B – Stand replacing severe fire that returns the vertical differentiation phase to the initiation community
- T1A – Introduced grasses dominate the understory with overstory of Ponderosa pine
- T1B - Fire exclusion over long periods allowing stands to grow into homogenous multi-storied stands
- T1C – Forest stands converted to cropland or pastureland
- R2A – Forest management practices to convert introduced grass understory to native perennial bunchgrasses
- R3A – Forest stands restored by overstory thinning, ground and ladder fuels reduction, prescribed fire and seeding of native grasses and forbs.
- R4A – Afforestation through planting of native trees /shrubs and seeding of native grasses and forbs, treatment of invasive plants and Time.

## State and transition model



## Animal community

substantial use by deer and elk, particularly in winter due to warm aspect and limited snow cover and high cover of bitterbrush which is highly palatable browse species. In areas with high cover of Idaho fescue, mule deer use as summer range. In areas with high chokecherry cover, there can be heavy mule deer browsing on chokecherry, serviceberry and other shrubs.

Livestock use mainly in areas with higher cover of the palatable bunchgrass Idaho fescue and rough fescue.

## Recreational uses

HIKING, BIKING, PHOTOGRAPHY

## Wood products

Timber productivity is low due to stockability limitations. Site preparation must consider grass cover in regards to tree regeneration. Tree planting may be considered.

## Other references

Pfister, Robert D., et al. "Forest habitat types of Montana." Gen. Tech. Rep. INT-GTR-34. Ogden, UT: US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Intermountain Forest & Range Experiment Station. 174 p. 34 (1977).

## Contributors

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## Approval

Kirt Walstad, 9/09/2023

## Rangeland health reference sheet

Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health is a qualitative assessment protocol used to determine ecosystem condition based on benchmark characteristics described in the Reference Sheet. A suite of 17 (or more) indicators are typically considered in an assessment. The ecological site(s) representative of an assessment location must be known prior to applying the protocol and must be verified based on soils and climate. Current plant community cannot be used to identify the ecological site.

Author(s)/participant(s)	
Contact for lead author	
Date	12/18/2020
Approved by	Kirt Walstad
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

## Indicators

### 1. Number and extent of rills:

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### 2. Presence of water flow patterns:

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3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:**
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4. **Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):**
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5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:**
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6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:**
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7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):**
- 
8. **Soil surface (top few mm) resistance to erosion (stability values are averages - most sites will show a range of values):**
- 
9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):**
- 
10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:**
- 
11. **Presence and thickness of compaction layer (usually none; describe soil profile features which may be mistaken for compaction on this site):**
- 
12. **Functional/Structural Groups (list in order of descending dominance by above-ground annual-production or live foliar cover using symbols: >>, >, = to indicate much greater than, greater than, and equal to):**
- Dominant:
- Sub-dominant:
- Other:
- Additional:
- 
13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):**
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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth ( in):**

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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):**

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16. **Potential invasive (including noxious) species (native and non-native). List species which BOTH characterize degraded states and have the potential to become a dominant or co-dominant species on the ecological site if their future establishment and growth is not actively controlled by management interventions. Species that become dominant for only one to several years (e.g., short-term response to drought or wildfire) are not invasive plants. Note that unlike other indicators, we are describing what is NOT expected in the reference state for the ecological site:**

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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:**

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