



This semi-annual newsletter is published by the USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center, 14119 Broad Street, Brooksville, FL 34601-4525, Tel: 352-796-9600, FAX: 352-799-7305, E-mail: cmaura@fl.nrcs.usda.gov

Demo Plantings Can Help With Program Goals

As greater emphasis is placed on certain conservation measures, we want to remind our partners in the field that plant materials are available from the Center for demonstration plantings. Demonstration plantings are great educational tools to help your customers see what plant materials are available, and how they can help solve conservation problems.

BUFFERS - regardless whether they are needed to help stop pollutants from entering water bodies; soil from eroding due to wind and rain; or provide protection and cover for wildlife, the Center can provide at least one type of plant material for the job. We would like to suggest the following to assist you:

- **Nutrient runoff - Mott Dwarf Elephantgrass** would be an ideal choice for this situation. Not only is this a high quality forage but it is proving to have the highest nutrient uptake ability in our current water quality study, in comparison to other introduced and native forage species.
- **Windbreaks and vegetative terraces - Vetivergrass** has proven to be very effective because it is a deep rooted clump grass that can be confined to a single row of 50 centimeters in width. It is very drought resistant even though it can withstand inundation for weeks. It has no known insect or disease problems.
- **Wildlife habitat improvement, critical area stabilization and range site improvement - Switchgrass** works well for these problem areas as well as other conservation uses. This perennial warm season grass provides excellent habitat for birds and small animals.
- **Lowland windbreaks or nutrient runoff buffers - Eastern gamagrass** prefers wet sites although some cultivars can be established on drier areas. It is primarily a warm season forage grass

with many other conservation uses. The Florida native species remain green for most of the year.

- **Wildlife - 'Chapingo' Mexican Teosinte** is a warm season tall grass similar to corn. The hard seed contained in the small pods provides late season food for wildlife such as wild turkey, dove and quail, and provides cover for the birds and many species of wild game. The seed remaining on the ground will often voluntarily germinate the following year.

- **Waterways, eroding stream bank or shoreline stabilization -** Your choice could be **Maidencane** or **Hemarthria**, perennial warm season grasses that produce dense stands because of their rhizomatous growth habit. **Tropic lalo** also spreads rapidly, is 50 to 60 percent shade tolerant and is adaptable to a wide variety of soils. Both of the **Bitter panicum** (Northpa and Southpa) and **Marshhay cordgrasses** (Sharp and Flageo) have also been effective in critical area stabilization.

- **Ground cover for erosion control -** The aesthetics provided by the summer growing **Perennial peanut** are outstanding, whether used along roadsides, engineering structures, groves, row crops, parks or homes. **Tropic lalo** works well in these situations also.

Coastal dune stabilization - The ever popular **Beach sunflower** and **Bitter panicums** are available, in addition to the **Marshhay cordgrasses** for making demo plantings on coastal sites.

If you would like further information on any of the plant materials mentioned above, or the quantities available for your use, contact the Plant Materials Center and the Plant Materials Specialist. Plant materials used alone or in conjunction with other conservation measures, can be a valuable tool for preserving our land and other natural resources for future generations.

Mission: Improve and Maintain Water Quality; Reduce or Control Erosion; Improve Forage for Pasture, Range, and Wildlife.

Florida Native Plant Interim Report

At last, in cooperation with the Florida Institute of Phosphate Research, the manual covering "Florida Native Plant Collection, Production and Direct Seeding Techniques" has been published and mailed to all Florida NRCS offices. We hope everyone in the field has had an opportunity to view this useful publication. If you haven't seen it ask your supervisor. Please give us a call if additional information is desired on any item covered. Limited quantities remain, however if you know of someone who would benefit from this publication let us know and we will do our best to provide them with a copy.

On The Road Again

The PMC staff covered many a road in Florida this winter in an effort to make additional collections of blue maidencane (*Amphicarpurn muhlenbergianum*) and hairawn muhly (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*). Our goal was to collect at least 100 of each species throughout all 67 counties in Florida. The last collections brought our total assembly of blue maidencane to 160. This collection is now relatively complete. We still need muhly from many more counties in FL, so keep an eye out for us.

Many of you in the field helped with our indiangrass and chalky bluestem collections. If you are wondering about the status of your efforts, be sure and check our annual activity report, coming out in May. We have some excellent candidates for cultivar release emerging from our 1997 plantings and evaluations.

Visit the Plant Materials Web Site

The Plant Materials Program has been launched into cyberspace! The National Plant Materials Center in Beltsville, MD has set up a home page for each of the 26 Centers, providing information on hundreds of plants, projects, planting guides, publications, etc. that might be of

benefit to you. Some home pages are in the process of being updated and/or completed, Florida's is one. Check it out at - <http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov>

Science and Engineering Fair

The PMC participated in the science fair, held at the University of Florida in Gainesville, again this year. Exposure at these science fairs leaves no doubt the public is very interested in learning about conservation measures, and PMC projects. Many inquires were made about the displayed pictures of native plant species on our various projects. Publications such as "Geography of Hope", "Invite birds to your home" and "Buffers common-sense conservation" were well received by visitors.

For those who live or work in the Gainesville area and were unable to attend this year, we suggest you plan to do so next year. There were many interesting exhibits in addition to NRCS's.

Are Your Needs Being Met With Our Program?

The direction or priorities of each Plant Materials Center is determined by the needs and concerns of the area they serve. When conservation problems are encountered in the field, and vegetative material or technology needs to be developed to correct or control these problems, it should be brought to the attention of the Plant Materials Technical Committee. If you see a need where you think our program can help, contact the committee member in your region. Committee members are: Darryl Williams, Maelo Reyes, Pete Deal, Catherine Ellis, Randy English, and Fletcher Stephens.

The next scheduled meeting of the Technical Committee is the week of June 8th. Contact a member of this committee and relay any concerns you might have, or suggestions of additional plant species we should add to current studies. We are here to serve you!