

Field Days 2011

The Manhattan Plant Materials Center (PMC) celebrated its 75th Anniversary June 7 and 8, with a two-day field day. The first day was tailored to the general public, and the second, geared toward Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees and our partners. Approximately 150 people attended the two-day event. When field day participants arrived they were offered an opportunity to test their plant identification knowledge. Some 75 plant species scattered around the PMC's headquarters were flagged and participants were given a list of plants to match with numbers found on the flagging. Jon Ungerer, NRCS State Resource Conservationist for Kansas, welcomed the group the first day. Edie Hadle, retired Biological Science Technician (BST) at the PMC, talked about its history and a little bit



Edie Hadle talks about the PMC's history on the first day of the two-day field day.

about her career at the PMC. She remembers the '51 flood and told of all the water-damaged plantings, scoured fields, and silt piled on crops and studies. The bridge in the bottoms across the Kansas River washed out, and it was eight weeks before her family could get into Manhattan.

PMC staff led guided tours of the PMC's buildings and grounds. Highlights were the PMC's mechanized seed-cleaning facilities, laboratory, and the greenhouse plant-production facility. Simultaneously, groups toured the PMC grounds while other groups boarded tour wagons to view foundation seed-production fields and various studies. After a catered lunch, Jennifer Hopwood, Midwest Pollinator Outreach Coordinator for the Xerces Society, spoke about pollinators. Each day participants broke into groups for the afternoon sessions and went to stations to learn more about soils, pollinators, woody plants, native

grasses and forbs, soil erosion by using the rainfall simulator, and medicinal plants. The weather for the two-day event was hot with plenty of sunshine. Despite a windy first day, every bit of shade was used to the max in the afternoon sessions. From a soils pit at the soils stop, Jim McDowell, NRCS Soil Scientist, and Cleveland Watts, NRCS State Soil Scientist, talked about many aspects of soils. Participants were offered an opportunity to walk down into the pit to look at the horizons of one of the soils found on the PMC.



From the soils tent, McDowell discusses the physical properties of soils.

Bob Atchison, Rural Forestry Program Coordinator for the Kansas Forest Service, gave an overview of the size and conditions of Kansas forest resources touching on urban forestry, agroforestry and riparian areas, and the traditional forest landscape. Assisting Atchison were Thad Rhodes, District Forester for North Central Kansas, and Nicole Ricci, Forest Health Specialist. She covered the top ten issues with diseases and insect pests that pose threats to trees in Kansas. Hopwood gave a presentation stressing the importance of pollinators. Participants learned about native pollinator species and how often their importance is overlooked. David Kraft, NRCS State Rangeland Management Specialist, assembled his group under the canopy of the 'Lippert' bur oak to talk about native grasses that the group could view in the distance. Lyle Frees, NRCS Natural Resource Specialist, gathered another group under an awning. Using a rainfall simulator, he demonstrated how runoff varied under different types of cover. Rhonda Janke, Associate Professor in Horticulture, Forestry, and Recreation at Kansas State University, began her talk on medicinal plants at the medicinal plant garden before moving the group to the nearby PMC veranda. The group gathered around the picnic tables where Janke passed out fresh cuttings of

many of the plants in her talk.

Eric Banks, NRCS State Conservationist for Kansas, welcomed the crowd on the second day. The speaker during lunch was Michael Kucera, NRCS Agronomist with the National Soil Ecology Team, Lincoln, Nebraska, who gave a presentation on Ecological Site Descriptions. The afternoon sessions were changed a bit. The rainfall simulator was replaced with a bio-energy stop and cover crops and seed collecting were also added to the lineup.



In the shade of a linden tree, Atchison holds up a copy of the Kansas Forest Action Plan.



Hopwood fields a question about pollinators following her presentation.

Co-presenters, John Row, Plant Materials Specialist (PMS) at the PMC, and Christine Taliga, PMS for Colorado, talked about the importance of contributing seed collections to the Plant Materials Program (PMP). The importance of making quality collections and properly documenting them was emphasized to participants.

Edie Hadle

On the second field day, I had the pleasure of giving Edie Hadle a VIP tour of the PMC on the gator. We stopped at the “Salac Prairie” where she remembered counting the seeds that went into each plot of what was a seeding mixture study of grasses and forbs to determine roadside seeding rates. Our next stop was the miscellaneous woody plants where she remembered some of the older plantings that are still in existence today. Our tour took us by seed increases of plant releases such as ‘Blackwell’ switchgrass, ‘Cimarron’ little bluestem, and ‘Barton’ western wheatgrass that were around during her time at the PMC. The black-sampson echinacea was in full bloom, and it was a treat for her to see this seed increase field that resulted from selections that were made back in her time at the PMC. She reminisced on how Erling Jacobsen, PMC Manager at the time, was responsible for the Colorado blue spruce plantings on the PMC and that he selected the bluest ones for planting near the Seed Cleaning Building (the PMC’s office was then located in the southeast corner of that building). She helped plant the Chinese chestnuts growing along the driveway.



Hadle stands in the beauty of the black-sampson seed increase field at the PMC.

Edie started her career at the PMC as a secretary in 1969. She said, “I wasn’t very good at it but no one else wanted the job. It was too far out of town, and I only took the job because my husband, Fred, was manager of the horticulture farm that was across the road from the PMC.” Her heart was in plants, and she could be found straying from the office to plant plots of wildflowers, taking notes on plantings, and doing just about any other job at the PMC. When an opening for a technician’s job at the PMC came open she applied and through her perseverance, she got the job and became the first female BST in the PMP. Edie worked at the PMC for 17 years and retired when her husband Fred retired as she did not want to make the drive to work alone.

~ John M. Row, Plant Materials Specialist