

## Title: Developing Native Plants for Louisiana Ecosystems - The Louisiana Native Plant Initiative

The lack of adapted commercial seed sources for restoration of coastal prairies and longleaf pine savannahs has caused limited success in Louisiana. The Louisiana Native Plant Initiative was established to collect, preserve, increase, and study native plants in the state. Seeds and plants of native species developed by the partnership will be released to commercial growers for production and eventual sale to the public. Currently, LNPI is comprised of 22 federal, state, and non-governmental organization partners. Over the past six years, evaluation and production locations including the USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Centers at Galliano, LA (GMPMC) and Nacogdoches, TX (ETPMC), Nicholls State University Farm at Thibodaux, LA, McNeese State University Farm at Lake Charles, LA, and University of Louisiana at Lafayette - Center for Ecology and Environmental Technology (CEET) have been established to select and increase seeds and plants of Louisiana ecotypes. The GMPMC is evaluating 25 collections of switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) from coastal areas with the hope of finding a selection with quick germination. At ETPMC, seed increase fields of rough coneflower (*Rudbeckia grandiflora*), ash sunflower (*Helianthus mollis*), and little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) have been established and are being managed for seed production. At the Nicholls State University Farm, upland collections of big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*), rough coneflower (*Rudbeckia grandiflora*), ash sunflower (*Helianthus mollis*), and eastern gamagrass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*) are being evaluated. At McNeese State University Farm, production and harvest protocols are being developed for rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*), woolly rose-mallow (*Hibiscus lasiocarpus*), and Texas coneflower (*Rudbeckia texana*). McNeese is also screening various herbicides for use on native seed production fields. At CEET, initial collection evaluations and seed increase of rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*), lance leaf blanketflower (*Gaillardia aestivallis*), gulf coast muhly (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*), shiny goldenrod (*Oligoneuron nitidum*), Kansas blazing Star (*Liatris pycnostachya*), and longspike tridens (*Tridens strictus*) are ongoing and a new seed processing facility is being built to assist with seed cleaning of harvested materials from all sites. In the fall of 2010, the LNPI plans to release its first group of Louisiana ecotypic selections to commercial growers.

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