



# Plant Materials Program Conservation Plant Releases

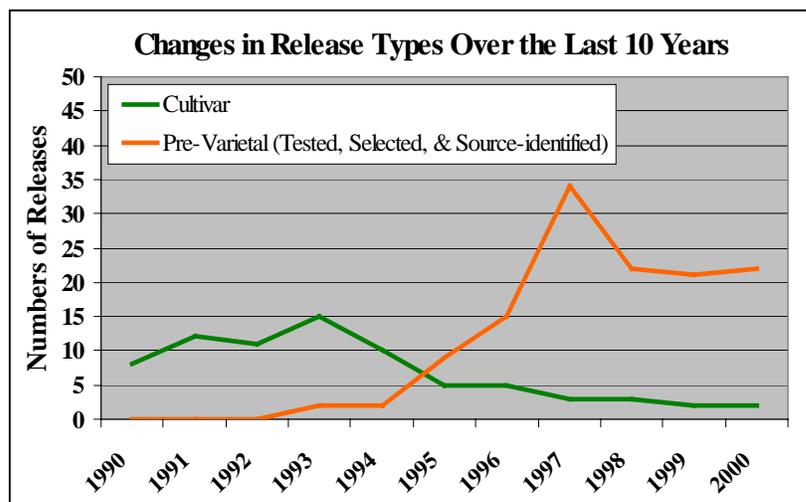
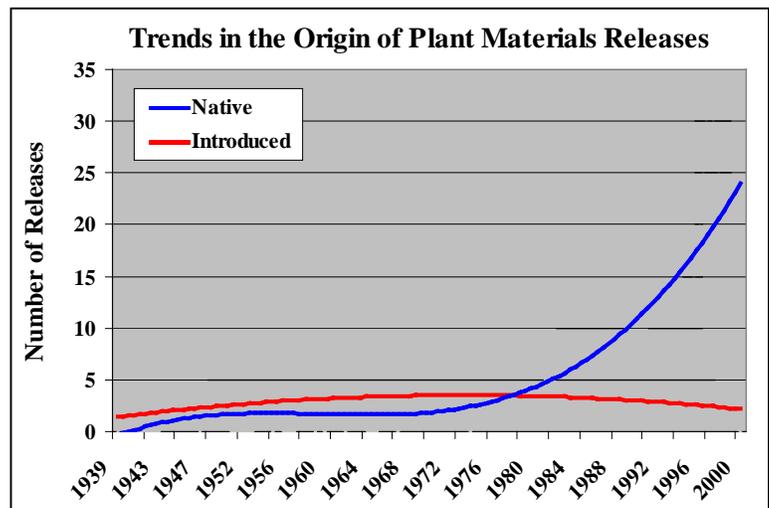
Products and Accomplishments

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Plant Materials (PM) Program develops and transfers effective state-of-the-art Plant Sciences Technology to meet critical resource conservation needs. The Program is best known for its Conservation Plant Releases. Plant Materials Centers have selected and released over 500 plant releases during the past 60 years. Some of these releases are no longer used and some have been replaced by better materials. **However, over 400 of the PM releases are still active and used today to meet conservation needs!** These plant releases form the backbone of NRCS Conservation Practice Specifications and they are vital for the success of Farm Bill Conservation Programs, including CRP/CREP, WHIP, GLCI, EQIP, and WRP.

Selection of new plant releases is still strong in the Program, and we are constantly adapting to changes in programs and needs. Releases from the Program continue to have a tremendous impact on conservation or our nation's natural resources.

## Changes and Trends in the Program's Plant Releases

Traditionally the program has focused attention on developing cultivars from both native and introduced species. The current importance of delivering plants to commercial growers sooner, the desire for broader-based germplasm, and the need for more native materials have brought about significant changes in the Program as shown in these figures.



Plant Materials now focuses its efforts almost entirely on native species and is using pre-varietal releases (Tested, Selected, and Source-identified release types) to get releases to the end user quickly and more efficiently.

## Distribution of Seed and Economic Impacts

After a Plant Materials Center (PMC) distributes a new release to a commercial nursery or seed grower, that grower increases the seed for sale to landowners and land managers. Sales of this seed represent a significant economic value to growers, distributors, and retailers. The following table summarizes the commercial production and value of 286 PM plant releases produced by growers in 2000. The dollar values presented here probably do not represent the full economic value of PM releases sold by distributors and retailers.

Type	Amount	Value
Foundation Seed	9,950 lbs.	\$150,170
Certified Seed	7,812,520 lbs.	\$45,954,268
Common Seed	8,675,177 lbs.	\$48,282,329
All Plants	735,059,136 ea.	\$27,882,817
<b>Total Value</b>		<b>\$122,269,584</b>



Bismarck Germplasm violet prairie clover, a 2000 release by the Bismarck, ND

## Impacts on Conservation

The impact of PM releases does not stop with economic value. PM releases are used in a wide variety of conservation practices throughout the United States and beyond our borders. Based on commercial sales of seed and plants during the year 2000 it is estimated that **enough seed was produced to plant 3.7 million acres, enough herbaceous plants were produced to plant 21,167 acres, and enough trees and shrubs were produced to plant a row that stretched for over 2,180 miles.** In all, our plant releases would cover an area **three times the size of Delaware.**

Most important is what our plant releases actually do for our nation's natural resources. Our releases are planted on a wide variety of sites - from flat grazing land to eroding streambanks. PM releases are used to address critical issues such as fire restoration, replanting after invasive species eradication, coastal erosion, nutrient filtering, and adaptation to drought. The results are a tremendous effect of PM releases on erosion and the amount of soil saved each year. Saved soil means more productive cropland, cleaner streams, and improved habitat for wildlife. The value of these is priceless.

A strong viable Plant Materials Program is vital to our nation's natural resources.



For more information on the Plant Materials Program, visit our web site at:

<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>

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