



Plant Chat

A Quarterly Publication from the Plant Materials Program to the NRCS Field Offices in ND, SD, and MN

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Welcome to Plant Chat!

Plant Chat is a quarterly newsletter developed for field offices (FO) in ND, SD, and MN by the staff of the Bismarck Plant Materials Center (PMC) and the Plant Materials Specialist (PMS). It is intended to provide you with timely articles on plant materials (PM) and related activities.

Where's Your Seed?

Do you know someone holding over grass seed for planting next spring? They may want to take a few minutes to evaluate their storage conditions. It may help in maintaining quality of this high-priced and sometimes scarce commodity. Following are a few questions to consider. **Was the seed dry when placed in storage?** Moist seed grows mold and can "heat," causing it to deteriorate. **Will the area stay dry?** Roofs often leak and floors can seep. Wet seeds deteriorate rapidly. **Is the area protected from rodents and insects?** Bait, traps, and setting seed off the floor may reduce injury from these critters. **How hot and humid is the storage area?** A poor combination of heat and relative humidity for extended periods of time can be lethal to your seed. As a rule of thumb, the sum of temperature (°F) + relative humidity should total less than 100. **Is the storage area checked periodically?** Surprises next spring are probably not in the seeding plan. **Is a new germination test planned in early spring?** A new test will let you know what seed is still viable after storage. Seed deterioration is a natural process that cannot be prevented. The rate of deterioration, however, can be reduced to the extent that seed can remain viable for extended periods of time if properly handled and stored. Storage conditions

can be the difference between success and failure of a planting.

Nancy Jensen, Agronomist

2001 PM Training Looks Bright

The Bismarck PMC will again be offering plant materials training to NRCS staff and partners in ND, SD, and MN. This training is intended to increase the awareness of the PM program and benefit FO activities. The training is scheduled for July 17-19, 2001, at the Bismarck PMC. The 2001 training session will focus on plant identification, drill calibration, seeding techniques, tree and shrub care, and other items relevant to FO activities. There will be one 3-day session. Each state may send eight employees, for a total of 24 participants.

Opportunities for training will also occur closer to home. The PMS and PMC staff will be collecting data on various active studies in ND, SD, and MN. This is an excellent training opportunity on various plant materials topics. A 2001 travel schedule listing dates and locations will be included in the *Northland News*. If you are interested in these training opportunities, please discuss this with your supervisor. Remember that the Bismarck PMC is your center and a technical resource for you concerning plant materials.

Wayne Duckwitz, PMC Manager

Chokeberry is No Choker!

Do not let the name fool you. The name chokeberry comes from the tendency of some related species to choke birds. Apparently, the fruit of black chokeberry does not adversely affect birds. This plant is not closely related to the chokecherry.

Black chokeberry *Photinia melan-*

carpa (formerly *Aronia*) is native to the eastern one-half of the United States, as far west as Minnesota. This plant has not been commercially cultivated in the U.S. since the early 1900s. It is very popular in eastern Europe and Russia, where some large-fruited cultivars are raised. Several cultivars developed for fruit production include 'Nero' and 'Viking.' Some mature plants have produced up to 20 pounds of fruit under ideal growing conditions. The juice of the berry is very high in pigments, antioxidants and vitamins.

The black chokeberry prefers swampy, low woodlands, but can also be found in drier locales. Like many woodland shrubs, it tolerates partial shade. Black chokeberry is insect pollinated, but will sometimes set fruit without pollination (parthenocary).

The PMC is testing this plant at 11 test sites. Plants were made available this past year for field plantings in all three states.

Mike Knudson, Forester



Five-year old chokeberry shrub at the Bottineau, ND test site



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