

Mission

The objective of the plant materials program is to provide cost effective vegetative solutions for soil and water conservation problems. This means developing superior plants and techniques, providing for their commercial availability, and promoting their use in natural resource conservation and other environmental programs.

Organization & Direction

- Established in April 1981.
- Directed by a 12 person advisory board.
- Technical guidance provided by a plant materials committee.
- Serving 27 million acres from the Rio Grande Plain to the Marshes of the South Texas Gulf Coast.



Becoming Part of the Process

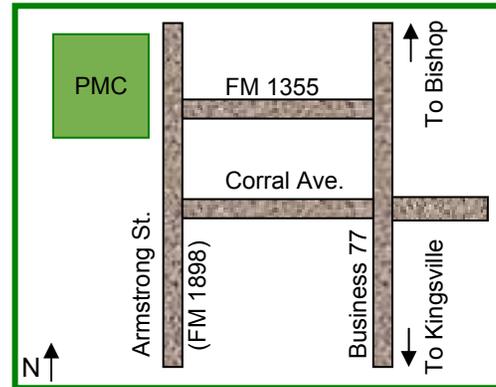
- Look for plants with one or more of the following characteristics:
 - ◆ Exceptional vigor
 - ◆ Adaptability
 - ◆ Special use or need
 - ◆ Unusual drought resistance
 - ◆ Wetland adaptability
 - ◆ Endangered
 - ◆ Wildlife potential
- To evaluate your findings, contact the Kika de la Garza Plant Materials Center or your local Natural Resources Conservation Service representative.

For More Information

Visit our Plant Materials website at <http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov> to learn more about using plants to solve conservation problems.

Location & Facilities

- The Center is located north of Kingsville on FM 1355.
- 76 acres of land and facilities are available for use from Texas A&M University-Kingsville and 15 acres of land from the King Ranch.



USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

Cooperating With

Texas A&M University-Kingsville

Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute

Gulf Coast Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

South Texas Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

USDA/ NRCS

Kika de la Garza Plant Materials Center

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Kika de la Garza Plant Materials Center



**Finding
Vegetative Solutions
for Soil and Water
Conservation Problems**

The Plant Materials Center

Plant testing and selection, as well as the development of new plant science technologies, are the primary products of our program. The process of releasing promising plant materials requires the assembly of plants, initial evaluation of plant performance, establishment of a seed nursery, advanced evaluation of management techniques for establishment and production, and field testing on diverse problem sites. The current program emphasis at the PMC is in the following areas:

Rangeland Habitat Restoration & Enhancement

- ◆ The PMC is collecting and propagating plant ecotypes for the South Texas Plains ecoregion and the Gulf Coast Prairie ecoregion. This will provide regionally adapted seed mixes for the restoration of native plant communities in these regions.



- ◆ Native forbs and legumes are needed to enhance wildlife habitats. The PMC is working on the development of native wildlife seed mixes with such promising species as orange zexmenia, prairie acacia, and golden dalea.

Coastal Habitat Restoration & Enhancement

- ◆ Dredge spoil islands and other coastal sites can be vegetated to provide waterbird nesting habitat. The PMC is collecting native shrubs and trees and evaluating different planting techniques for these sites.



- ◆ Texas wetlands provide critical habitat for migratory waterfowl, as well as for neotropical birds. Texas has seen an estimated 52% loss (8 million acres) in wetland acreage over the past 200 years. The PMC is evaluating plant materials that will assist in constructing and restoring these important wetlands.



- ◆ There are an estimated 600,000 acres in South Texas which exhibit complex saline and alkaline soil problems and resist revegetation. Big sacaton, gulf cordgrass, and seashore dropseed are some of the species being evaluated for the restoration of these sites.



Coastal Shoreline Stability

- ◆ There are miles of coastal shoreline along the Texas Gulf Coast with eroding bluffs in need of adapted plant material for stabilization. Bioengineering methods being investigated for stabilizing these sites include using wave barriers, concrete cellular blocks, and turf reinforcement matting along with adapted, saline tolerant plant material.



- ◆ Many of the sand dunes along the Gulf Coast that provide protection from tropical storms for Texas communities have been damaged or destroyed by storms and human activities. The PMC is investigating dune creation methods with such species as bitter panicum and sea oats.



Erosion Control & Water Quality Improvement on Agricultural Land

- ◆ Constructed wetlands are receiving increased attention as viable systems for the treatment of wastewater from municipal, industrial, and agricultural sources. The PMC is currently evaluating adapted plant materials for both fresh water and saline wetlands in South Texas.



- ◆ The PMC is evaluating using vegetative barriers or grass hedges as an alternative to the traditional mechanically constructed terraces. These barriers may provide a low-cost method of effective erosion control on cropland.



- ◆ The PMC is evaluating native grasses as alternatives to introduced, invasive grasses currently used for Texas roadways.



- ◆ Native shrubs and trees play an important role in providing critical wildlife habitat, as well as preventing shoreline erosion in riparian, coastal, and wetland sites. The PMC is currently collecting and evaluating native adapted plant materials for the restoration and enhancement of these areas.

