

Plant Materials Program

“The Plant Materials Program and its cooperators have contributed the bulk of the material and technology now used in ecosystem restoration and are our foundation for meeting conservation challenges of the future.”

-- D.T. Booth and T.A. Jones, *Native Plants Journal*

Implementing the Farm Bill

Farm Bill programs can be implemented by using structural (vegetative and engineering) or management conservation practices. Plants make conservation happen. And plants can help you implement the 2008 Farm Bill.



No matter which Farm Bill program you are working with, you will most likely utilize vegetative and management practices to accomplish some of your customers' conservation goals. Your Plant Materials Specialist and Plant Materials Center staff can provide recommendations and assistance with:

- **Conservation plants** that are performance tested in specific growing environments to solve various conservation problems;
- **Applied technology** developed for successful plant establishment and management of seeding mixtures; and
- **On-site technical assistance** to field offices, partners, farmers, and ranchers.

Conservation Plants

More than 75 percent of the grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees listed in the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) are Plant Materials Program (PMP) releases. Plant Materials Program studies have produced over 65 percent of the plant management information used by NRCS. Your Plant Materials staff is available to assist NRCS field offices with species recommendations and planting technology for all the programs in the Farm Bill including:

- **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**- Practices addressing erosion control on range and pasture lands, development of wildlife habitat, restoring native plant communities, and revegetating disturbed areas. Adapted native species such as bluebunch wheatgrass, big bluegrass, big bluestem, Indiangrass, and prairie flax. Effective seed mixes, planting times, and seedbed preparation techniques are found in the FOTG.
- **Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)**- Plants and technology for restoring or enhancing wetland and riparian areas. Adaptive native species include willows, sedges, creeping spike rush, and alkali bulrush. The PMP has developed countless technologies that are adapted to specific ecological regions of the country, including soil bioengineering techniques in wet and dry areas and containers designed for transplanting in arid regions.



- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**- This includes plant materials and technology for practices that address animal waste treatment, nutrient uptake, odor control, windbreaks, living snow fences, pollinators, invasive species suppression, and plant diversity. Improved species include switchgrass, Indiangrass, creeping foxtail, and tall wheatgrass for use in nutrient uptake; hybrid poplars, green ash, dogwoods and willows for odor control and windbreaks; Rocky Mountain juniper and purpleosier willows and other small trees for living snow fences; and western yarrow, coneflower, and sunflowers for pollinators.

- **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)**- Plants and technology for practices that address pollinators, revegetation after removal of invasive species, plants to improve wildlife habitat, and plants to provide food and shelter for the species of concern. Adapted plant species include western yarrow, purple prairieclover, black-eyed susan, coneflower, silverberry, sunflowers, switchgrass, basin wildrye, lupines, and lespedeza.
- **Biomass Research** – Research continues on the development of cultural practices that will result in high quality and higher yields of biomass. Species being evaluated include switchgrass, big bluestem, indiagrass, giant miscanthus, and tall wheatgrass.
- **Chesapeake Bay Program** – Plants and technology for a new program to implement vegetative measures on agricultural lands in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.



Fourwing saltbush is used for restoration in the southwest, providing food and habitat for wildlife and livestock.

Technical Assistance

Your Plant Materials staff provides new technology and one-on-one technical assistance including:

- Recommendations for enhancing ecological diversity, stabilizing streambanks, revegetating wetlands, implementing odor control, establishing buffers, and improving range and pastureland quality.



'Shelter' switchgrass provides cover in the snow

- Advice on cultural practices, such as seedbed preparation, seed placement, seedling establishment and stand management, etc.
- On-site technical assistance with land managers, and field tours and training sessions for field office and conservation district staff partners, farmers and ranchers, Tribes, limited resource producers, and other land managers.
- Demonstration plantings and cooperative research projects to help local land managers find solutions for specific conservation problems.
- Coordination of seed production with commercial growers to assure seed of adapted conservation plants is available to the public.
- Reference materials, such as brochures, plant guides, technical guides, newsletters and technical articles are available to the public and NRCS personnel on the Plant Materials website at <http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>.

About Us

The USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program consists of a network of 27 Plant Materials Centers (PMCs) and Plant Materials Specialists located throughout the United States. For over 70 years, PMCs and Specialists have provided essential and effective plant solutions for critical habitats, environmental concerns, management practices, and key farm and ranch programs.

For more information, visit:
<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>

