

Conservation Plant Releases Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center

The Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center (PMC) is a branch of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service. It is one of 26 plant materials centers located throughout the United States. The Center is located on the northwest corner of Americus in southwestern Georgia and is approximately 40 miles north of Albany. Areas served include Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina and parts of Tennessee and Florida.

It is our mission to develop plant materials and state-of-the-art plant science technology to solve natural resource problems and meet the objectives of environmental programs. Our program emphasizes the use of native plants. We develop, test and release superior adapted plants to commercial growers along with production and management technology.

The Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center is studying several native plants for forage, nutrient uptake, wildlife habitat improvement and 2002 Farm Bill implementation.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Plant Materials Centers in the Southeast are conducting studies on native plant materials to meet the conservation needs in the Southeast Region. The studies involve the collection and evaluation of native plant materials that have a Southeastern origin. The present commercial source of native grass seed now comes from other regions and the 'native plant movement' is demanding plants and seeds that have an origin close to the area of use.



“Kinchafoonee” Virginia Wildrye



‘Americus’ Indiangrass



‘Highlander’ Eastern Gamagrass

The Plant Materials Center has eight active studies involving plants native to the Southeastern U.S. Major emphasis has been placed on establishment, growth, management and culture of native warm season grasses. Big bluestem, switchgrass, little bluestem, indiangrass and eastern gamagrass show great potential as cattle forage and as wildlife habitat improvement plants.

Until recently there were no native warm season grasses selected for the Southeastern U.S. However, in the summer of 2002 the Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center in Americus, Georgia released ‘Americus’ Indiangrass. Americus was selected from plant material originating in the Southeast. It is adapted to upland sites of our region for use as cattle forage, wildlife habitat improvement, soil conservation and plant community restoration.

In 2003, the Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center released ‘Highlander’ Eastern Gamagrass and ‘Kinchafoonee’ Virginia Wildrye native grasses for the Southeast. Iuka eastern gamagrass is the best adapted variety commercially available for the Southeast. Evaluation plantings in Georgia, such as the demonstration planting at Fort Valley State University, shows good seedling vigor and growth the first year of establishment.



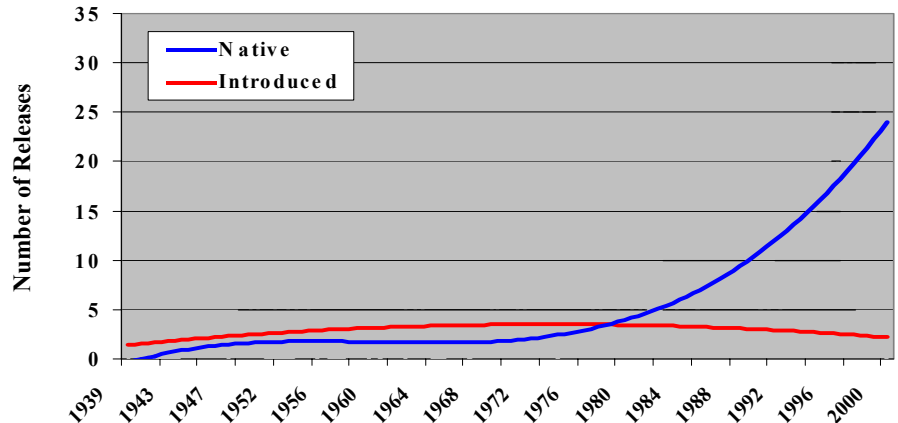
Iuka eastern gamagrass evaluation at Fort Valley State University

Changes and Trends in Plant Materials Program Releases

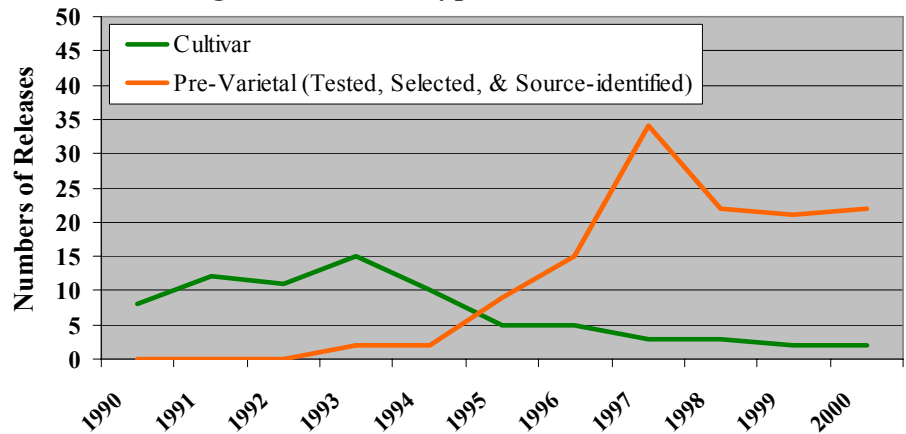
Traditionally, the program has focused attention on long-term cultivar selection of both native and introduced species. The current importance of delivering plants to commercial growers sooner, the desire for broader-based germplasm, and the need for more native materials have brought about significant changes in the program.

The Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center now focus their efforts almost entirely on native species and use pre-varietal releases (tested, selected, and source-identified release types) to get releases to the end user quickly and efficiently.

Trends in the Origin of Plant Materials Releases



Changes in Release Types Over the Last 10 Years



For more information visit <http://www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/pmc/pmc.html> or <http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov> or contact the Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center at 229-924-4499, email at mike.owsley@ga.usda.gov or Donald Surrency at 706-595-1339 ext. 3, email at don.surrency@ga.usda.gov

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