

# Plant Press

Finding Vegetative  
Solutions for  
Conservation  
Problems



USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service - Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center

## Louisiana Plant Materials Program Update - First Quarter 2007

Golden Meadows Plant Materials Center and the State Plant Materials Specialist

**Greenhouse Repair:** Problems with contractor accidents, electrical issues, gas lines, and supply deliveries has caused completion delays. Greenhouse production is a critical part of PMC operations and delays have caused a disruption with project schedules and completion of reimbursable agreements. Center staff continues to work with onsite contracting technicians from the watershed office overseeing that work and construction problems are resolved.

**Germplasm Maintenance:** Collection and accessioning of plant materials ongoing. Increase of germplasm is behind schedule due to greenhouse construction. Black Mangrove seed has been collected with germination being performed in the seed cooler and office. Some seed has been sent to growers for propagation. Propagation of seedlings for the Forest Service and Louisiana Native Plant Initiative are waiting upon greenhouse completion.

**Plant Distribution:** Plants of Timbalier Germplasm gulf bluestem distributed to wetland plant vendors. A special distribution of over 1500 trees has been made to a variety of hurricane restoration projects throughout SE Louisiana in conjunction with BTNEP. Wax myrtle plants were provided to BTNEP for their Eco Fest. Several thousand surplus plants were donated to City Park in New Orleans as part of the Restore America's Estuaries meeting.

**Studies and Reimbursable:** New projects are on the horizon with BTNEP for the production and planting of woody plant along the sides of degraded bayous. Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is interested in the evaluation and production of plants for coastal zones within their state. Multi-state initiative with the Wildlife Management Institute (Native Warm Season Grass Study), sites located and prepared. Conservation Field Trial initiated with Area 1 Forester to evaluate herbicide tolerance on bottomland hardwood species.

**Outreach:** Staffed information booths at the Voice of the Wetlands Exposition in Houma, and the National Plant Materials Booth at the Restore America's Estuaries meeting, New Orleans. Center staff provided training to volunteers assisting with planting efforts in City Park New Orleans. Plant Materials Program staff actively participated with advisory boards to the Louisiana Native Plant Initiative and the City Park New Orleans Restoration Advisory Committee. During the first quarter the PMC recorded 171 personal contacts with constituents providing both verbal and printed information. The PMC conducted two tours (one 4-H group and one college class).

## The Mission of the NRCS Plant Materials Program:

*We develop and transfer plant materials and plant technology for the conservation of natural resources. In working with a broad range of plant species, including grasses, forbs, trees, and shrubs, the program seeks to address priority needs of field offices and land managers in both public and private sectors. Emphasis is focused on using native plants as a sustainable way to solve conservation problems and protect ecosystems.*



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If you would like more information call us at (985) 475-5280 or visit our web site at <http://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/lapmc>

## The PMC Meets Cajun Culture

Nichols State University at Thibodaux, LA invited the PMC to set up a booth at it's Eighth Annual Folklife Festival at "Jubilee—A Festival of the Arts and Humanities", held March 15 . We went happily, with a truck full of display materials, plants and handouts for the crowd. Jubilee is month-long festival to celebrate the arts and humanities, which includes visual arts, music, theatre, dance, literary, historical, scientific, and other educational issues. The Folklife Festival, which showcases Cajun traditions, was the same day as the 40th LA Region X Annual Social Studies Fair, which meant that hundreds of middle school students and their parents joined hundreds of NSU students, faculty and other community members, young and not so young. All ages danced, talked and laughed the hours away, and everybody appeared to be eager to learn new ideas. Our PMC display was a very busy place indeed.

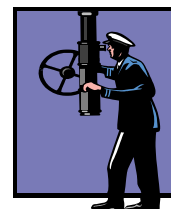
While Cajun, classical, and choir music flowed through the air, hundreds of interested and concerned LA citizens stopped by to read and talk about the Plant Materials Program and specifically about what is happening with plants, plant research and restoration efforts relative to this region. Discussions at the booth ranged 'all over the map', from economical development through needed coastal plant production on a 'grassroots' basis, to 'where does this plant grow? and how do I grow it? and can I volunteer?', etc.

It was refreshing but bittersweet to hear how many local people, regardless of any given income or socio-economic level, are so keenly aware of their own natural resources 'crisis' on the Gulf coast and want to help. A few people, now living in a FEMA trailer, even asked about acquiring native plants to replant on their hurricane devastated land. Daycare children mentioned that "the hurricane took all of (their) plants away". Things have definitely and suddenly changed forever down here, but we are here to help. People are very gracious and thankful when we tell them what we are about. "Any friend of Louisiana plants is a friend of mine." is only one of the many favorable and supportive comments the PMC received that day.



## Looking for a Few Good Switchgrass Plants

Many releases of switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) are not well adapted for wet soils commonly found in South Louisiana. An objective of the PMC is to collect commercially available cultivars and also from natural plant communities in order to test for suitability. Louisiana vegetative collections are being planned, and study plots will be established, monitored, and evaluated for plants' adaptability to Louisiana's wet soils. Plants will be increased and maintained at the center for field plantings around Louisiana.



We're on the Web!

[www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov)

- **Plant Materials Information/Publications Under Review:** 2006 Progress Report of Activities, Timbalier Germplasm Gulf Bluestem Plant Guide, Sea Oats Plant Guide, Tech Note-Conservation Seed Dealers, Tech Note-Plant Materials for CP-332 Contour Buffer Strips, Tech Note-Plant Materials for CP-386 Field Borders, Tech Note-Plant Collection Information Sheet for Switchgrass, Tech Note-Plant Collection Information Sheet for Little Bluestem, Tech Note-Plant Collection Information Sheet for Partridge Pea, Tech Note-Plant Collection Information Sheet for Indiangrass, Tech Note-Plant Collection Information Sheet for Big Bluestem.