

# Plant Press

Finding Vegetative  
Solutions for  
Conservation  
Problems



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

## Louisiana Plant Materials Program Update – Spring 2007

The spring has been a blessing with the greenhouses now up and running after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Thanks to the skills of our staff the greenhouses are functional and the headhouse has been spruced up.



## Submersed Aquatic Vegetation

Our cooperative efforts are moving ahead with submittal of the Quality Assurance Plan for the Submersed Aquatic Vegetation Project (SAV). As in most coastal areas, our SAVs in Louisiana have been rapidly disappearing. In cooperation with the Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) the Golden Meadow PMC has initiated a project to determine the cultural needs of two SAV species for nursery propagation. Our goal is to demonstrate that the plants can be produced on a commercial scale for revegetation of our marshes and bayous. Included in the project will be tests of substrate materials which can be transported to remote sites and easily secured to the marsh bottom where the transplants can become established. We hope to identify the site characteristics that will increase the chances of successful commercial outplantings.

## DNA Fingerprinting

In the past several years the Golden Meadow PMC has been working with the Louisiana State University AgCenter Rice Research Station to obtain DNA fingerprints of species that we have released. Our 'Vermilion' Smooth Cordgrass is the first species for which we have data. Having the fingerprint of material that is vegetatively propagated allows us to assure that our germplasms are still pure. Finger prints run by Dr. Herry Utomo of the Rice Research Station showed that our production field had about six percent off type material. That is within the margin of error allowed, but did encourage us to establish another production field. Sources of contamination were probably from seed of selfed plants and outside pollen. As resources allow, we will attempt to obtain DNA fingerprints of all our vegetatively propagated releases.



## Volume 5: Issue 2 Spring 2007

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## 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.*

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 Cheniere**

A cheniere is a ridge in the marsh. Prior to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century these ridges were a major feeding and resting place for migratory birds passing to and from Central and South America. The name cheniere comes from the French work for Oak. In this case it is the live oak *Quercus virginiana*. With the coming of gas and oil drilling in south Louisiana marshes have suffered subsidence and salt intrusion into fresh water habitats vital to migration have been lost. In cooperation with BTNEP and the Greater Fourchon Port Commission, the PMC is attempting to determine ways to jump start succession on an artificial cheniere built of dredge material from expansion of Port Fourchon. Some of the factors hindering invasion of plants include extreme exposure to sun and wind and soil salinity to high for all but the hardiest of plants. To ameliorate these conditions we are altering the terrain to break the wind, trap fresh water and hold seed. Additionally several soil amendments are being tested to flush salt from the soil more quickly. Some of our results were presented at the National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration.



**LIVING CHENIERE**



**AFTER SALT WATER INCURSION**

**Outreach**

Spring and Summer will be an active time in our dormitory and meeting room. So far we have hosted the Gulf Coast Joint Venture executive council meeting with fourteen of the 26 members staying in the dorm. A wonderful group of students from Pinecrest School in West Monroe spent a week at the PMC. During their stay they toured the facility and spent a day working a restoration project at Lake Boudreaux. It's surprising how many of the young people are familiar with the problems of the Louisiana Marsh. Visits like this are a grand opportunity for students and chaperones alike to see first hand the things that they have heard in school and the media.

The PMC was further able to spread the message of our mission at two different meetings. Lafourche Parish celebrated its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Raceland. An estimated 6000 people came for a full day of displays, music and of course food.

The Master Gardeners of Terrebonne had their annual field day in Houma. Again we had our display with sample of the plants we have released and a new display of the Native Plant Initiative. The field day featured displays, plant vendors and lectures on various aspects of gardening



**We're on the Web!**  
[www-plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www-plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov)

