

**KIKA DE LA GARZA
PLANT MATERIALS CENTER
USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION SERVICE**



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SOUTH TEXAS FORBS AND LEGUMES:

The Kika de la Garza Plant Materials Center has recently completed its evaluation of Orange zexmenia (*Zexmenia hispida*). Orange zexmenia, formerly known as hairy wedelia (*Wedelia hispida*), is a common, native, warm-season, perennial forb. A member of the sunflower (compositae) family, it grows to 60 centimeters tall blooming from March to December. It's shrub-like form, bright yellow-orange flowers, and hardiness in both dry and moist conditions make it an attractive plant for landscape use. In addition, it is easily cultivated and is often browsed by deer, sheep and goats.

Sixteen accessions of orange zexmenia were evaluated at the Kika de la Garza PMC in Kingsville, Texas beginning in 1994. An initial evaluation plot was planted at the Center in 1994 and was evaluated by Center staff for four years. Both transplanted rows and seeded plots were evaluated for plant survival, plant hardiness, growth characteristics, potential problems and seed production. Germination testing was conducted on all the accessions during 1997 and 1998. In 1999, the PMC decided to release a composite collection of orange zexmenia. The composite consists of 4 accessions originating from Lockhart, Bandera, Goliad and Eldorado, Texas. The PMC is working on seed production at this time and plans to formally release orange zexmenia in 2001.

The PMC has initiated two new studies this spring. We are evaluating 6 accessions of mallow and 36 different accessions of native Texas legumes. The native legumes include prairie acacia (*Acacia angustissima*), golden dalea (*Dalea aurea*), round head prairie clover (*Dalea multiflora*), purple prairie clover (*Dalea purpurea*), scarlet pea (*Indigofera miniata*), anil indigo (*Indigofera suffruticosa*), wild cowpea (*Vigna luteola*) and bundleflower (*Desmanthus* spp.).

The mallow study is looking at copper globe mallow (*Sphaeralcea angustifolia*), woolly globe mallow (*S. Lindheimeri*) and Indian mallow (*Abutilon fruticosum*). These species are known to have value for various wildlife and livestock in Texas. We will evaluate

survival, vigor, seed production, germination and emergence on all these accessions in an effort to find adapted and vigorous native Texas forbs and legumes for South Texas.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

The Kika de la Garza PMC is working with Mr. J.R. Jones and his eighth grade classes at Grant Middle School in Corpus Christi. They have initiated a study of an urban stormwater ditch that flows past the school. The PMC helped train the class in water quality monitoring, plant evaluation, bank stability assessment and simple surveying. The long-term goals of this project are to evaluate different plant material and bioengineering techniques for improving the bank stability, water quality, wildlife habitat and overall aesthetics of this urban stormwater ditch. Overall, the class would like to see this unpleasant urban eyesore transformed to a pleasant urban riparian corridor that would provide multiple functions in addition to stormwater.

The Kika de la Garza PMC is also working closely with Allen Collins, soil conservation technician, and the Poth High School in Wilson County. Allen has been instrumental in providing conservation training to the high school agriculture classes in Poth. He has secured funding and provided field training to these high school students. This spring we worked with Allen to seed eastern gamagrass and transplant switchgrass as a demonstration of vegetative barriers for erosion control.



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