

East Texas PMC News

A publication of the East Texas Plant Materials Center

Fall-Winter Edition-February 2006

Rita Visits East Texas PMC

September 24, 2005, the Center had an unwelcome visitor by the name of Rita. Rita blew all day long with wind gusts up to 65 mph. The eye of Rita went approximately 30 miles to the east of the Center. We were fortunate to have only minor damages. Several panels of the greenhouse roof were damaged along with shingle damage to two out buildings. Many trees at the experimental forest were blown over by the high winds blocking roads and downing power lines. The Center was without power for a week. We realize others were less fortunate and received major damages from which they are still trying to recover.



Texas' New Plant Materials Specialist

Rob Ziehr is the new plant materials specialist replacing James Alderson who retired, January 2005. Rob has worked with the Natural Resource Conservation Service in Louisiana, Colorado, Oklahoma, Maryland, and Texas. Rob is a graduate of Texas A&M University with a range science degree. The specialist position is located at the state office in Temple, Texas. Field plantings and demonstration plantings will be coordinated through Rob. He can be contacted by phone: (254) 742-9888 or email: robert.ziehr@tx.usda.gov.

Initial Evaluations Transplanted to Field



Collections made by field office personnel were transplanted to the field during the spring and fall. Collections of little and pinehill bluestem, gayfeather, splitbeard bluestem were made. The plants will be evaluated for growth, flowering dates, seed maturity dates, rate of spread, plant height, vigor, along with other data. This data will be used to select superior plants for use as conservation cover, wildlife habitat, and range plantings.

2006 Field Day

You are cordially invited to attend the 2006 East Texas PMC Field Day. Mark your calendars for May 31st. Representative Louie Gohmert is scheduled to be the keynote speaker. The agenda is still being developed; however, we know we will have field tours, program, training sessions, and displays about the East Texas PMC projects and production fields, plus information on the national plant materials program.

Featured Plant - Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)

President Bush in his State of the Union Address mentioned the use of switchgrass in the production of biofuels. Since mentioning the plant in his address there has been public interest in the plant. What is switchgrass? It is a warm season, perennial, long lived, native grass. It has a wide range and adaptation to most soils. Switchgrass spreads by seed and rhizomes. It has a mature plant height of 6-7 feet and has rapid growth characteristics. It has a high cellulose content and yields in excess of 8 to 10 ton/acre is possible under high fertility and moisture. It is a common native grass to east Texas and western Louisiana. 'Alamo' and 'Blackwell' are two cultivars well adapted to the PMC service area. Additional information can be found at <http://plants.nrcs.usda.gov>.



East Texas PMC Participates in Regional Workshop

Jim Stevens, ETPMC manager, participated in the Central Regional Plant Material Workshop, Manhattan, Kansas, November, 15-17, 2005. The workshop covered initial and advanced evaluations being conducted by plant material centers in the central region. Presentations of research projects were given by each plant materials center to allow collaboration between centers. State Resource Conservationists and technical center specialists attended to discuss the importance of plant materials and conservation needs to be addressed by the program. Some of the needs are: phytoremediation, measure of plant foliage density for wind movement, root mass production of plants, and plant growth curves.

Angus Mims Retires from Board of Directors

Angus Mims, SWCD director, rancher, businessman, and a founder of the East Texas Plant Materials Center has notified us he will no longer be able to serve on the board of directors for the Center. Angus began his tenure on the board in 1982. He was very instrumental in helping develop the Center from the beginning. Working with Congressman Chapman, Angus was able to get program funding for the Center. From 1982-1988 the Soil Conservation Service provided a manager and vehicle, Stephen F. Austin State University provided office space and land, and east Texas SWCDs accessed themselves \$200/year. Angus' dedication and service will be missed. Angus felt he needed to retire due to health reasons and not being able to travel to board meetings.

Pat Hudson Appoints Worth Whitehead

Pat Hudson, President of the Deep East Texas Association of SWCD, has asked Worth Whitehead, Rusk Co. SWCD, to serve on the board of directors filling the vacancy left by Angus Mims. Mr. Whitehead has been attending the board meeting for the past five years and is familiar with the Center's operations. Mr. Whitehead is a committed conservationist and believes in the mission of the Center and use of native plant materials for solving natural resources conservation concerns.

Kara Walker, SFASU Graduate Student

The East Texas PMC in cooperation with Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture graduate student Kara Walker is determining the best method of stratification and scarification of 'Crockett' herbaceous mimosa. Kara has her B.S. in animal science and is working on her M. S. in environmental science. Kara's thesis is on mechanical scarification times and chemical scarification and their effects on germination of the mimosa. Kara is from Jacksonville, Texas. Dr. Hans Williams is Kara's major professor.



Alan Pringle Under Takes Phytoremediation Study

Alan Pringle, graduate student from Houston, is doing research on short rotation woody crops for phytoremediation of high phosphorus soils due to excessive chicken litter application. Alan, under the guidance of Dr. Ken Farrish, is doing tissue analysis and biomass production for the removal of phosphorus and nitrogen by eight tree groups. Alan is also working on his M.S. degree in environmental science at the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture.



Plant Materials Website:

Plant – Materials.nrcs.usda.gov

The East Texas Plant Materials Center is located at the Stephen F. Austin Experimental Forest near Nacogdoches, Texas. Our address is 6598 FM2782, Nacogdoches, Texas 75964. Phone: (936) 564-4873 Fax: (936) 552-7924

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