

PLANT MATERIALS MIDSOUTH

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Mississippi's Loss is Washington's Gain

by: Joel Douglas

The PMC is losing another dedicated employee. Herby Bloodworth has accepted a position on the Natural Resources Strategic Planning Staff in Washington D.C. effective September 28. Herby has served as conservation agronomist for ten years at the PMC. During his tenure, Herby became well known for his research with cover crops and conservation tillage. He was one of the key players that helped bring no-till cotton to Mississippi. In the last five years, his focus shifted from cotton to alternative cash crops. As a result, he successfully developed conservation tillage systems for sweetpotatoes, southernpea, and peanut. His expertise and his fine character will be missed. The PMC staff wishes him the best of luck in his new job.

Wildflower Tour

by: Janet Grabowski

On June 18, the PMC hosted a tour for Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation District employees. The tour familiarized them with the wildflowers being produced at the PMC and offered for sale through the Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission. This tour was made possible by help and support from Gale Martin, Don Underwood, Joey Whitfield, and other members of the Commission staff and from our recent retirees, B. B. Billingsley, Joe Snider, and Jimmie Miller, who were recruited to volunteer as tour leaders and drivers. More than 200 people attended and toured the production fields and PMC facilities. We were fortunate to catch one of the few days in June that it did not rain, however, the ground was so saturated that it did pose a challenge to pull the tour wagons up hill. The black-eyed susans, clasping coneflower, and calliopsis were all in full flower. The keynote speaker for the event was

the First Lady of Mississippi, Mrs. Pat Fordice. She spoke about her plans to plant yellow wildflowers along the roadways in conjunction with the Splendors of Versailles exhibit to be hosted by Mississippi in 1998. Additional tours are planned, possibly at different times of the year to spotlight additional wildflowers being produced at the PMC.

New Interim Practice Standard

by: Joel Douglas

For the past four years, the PMC has featured articles in this newsletter and have written numerous progress reports on grass hedges as an alternative vegetative practice to field strip cropping (buffer strips) and in some situations earthen terraces. Many of you have expressed an interest in this technology because of the concept of planting narrow vegetative strips (3-5 ft. wide) as opposed to a 20-30 ft. wide vegetative strip to control soil erosion on sloping cropland. The idea of a practice that takes less land out of production is appealing to many small farmers.

David Summers, State Agronomist, developed the state interim practice standard for grass hedges with assistance from PMC and the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). This practice standard and other revised practice standards were distributed to field offices in Mississippi several weeks ago. However, the practice was named **VEGETATIVE BARRIERS** (code 734) rather than grass hedges.

Information used to prepare the vegetative barrier interim practice standard was compiled from several years of research conducted by ARS and experience gained from on-farm field demonstrations by NRCS.

To receive a copy of this interim practice standard, call David Summers at 601-965-4339, ext 256.

Technical Note

A technical note on how to establish and manage Alamo switchgrass for field borders and filter strips

was recently developed by Ken Ainsworth, Area Agronomist for the Mississippi Delta, and Joel Douglas, PMC Manager. This technical note will soon be distributed to field offices in Mississippi. If other field offices in the PMC service area are interested in obtaining a copy of this technical note, call Joel at the Jamie L. Whitten PMC at 601-675-2588.

Herbicide Tolerance of Switchgrass

by: Joel Douglas

One of the needs identified by field offices in the PMC's service area is plants for vegetative barriers, field borders, and filter strips. 'Alamo' switchgrass has shown great promise for this use. Alamo is being evaluated in cropland fields in the hills and in the delta of Mississippi for vegetative barriers, field borders, and filter strips for soil erosion control, wildlife habitat, and water quality improvement.

One question raised by NRCS employees and landowners is, "What happens to switchgrass if it is sprayed with a cotton herbicide?" To answer this question, the PMC and Dr. David Shaw, MAFES Weed Scientist, has set up an experiment at the PMC to evaluate herbicide tolerance of switchgrass. Preplant (PPL) and postemergence (POST) herbicides for cotton production are direct sprayed at full and ¼ rates (to simulate spray drift) to a mature stand of switchgrass. Paraquat and Roundup® are applied PPL in April, and MSMA, Select®, Staple®, Fusilade®, Poast Plus®, and Assure II® are applied POST in June.

Preliminary results show switchgrass has varying degrees of tolerance to these herbicides. Fulisade, Poast Plus, and Assure II at full and ¼ rates caused moderate to complete kill. Minimal to no damage was seen in the other herbicides at full or ¼ rates. The experiment will be repeated again next year and a final report sent to field offices who can share the results with interested landowners or groups.

Plant Release Production

by: Janet Grabowski

Vegetative propagules of the three source-identified wetland plants released in 1996, Indian Bayou Source powdery thalia, Leaf River Source woolgrass, and Leflore Source creeping burhead, are being commercially produced at six nurseries in Mississippi and Tennessee and will soon be available for sale to the public. We have developed color brochures on each plant, and we hope to have them printed within the next few months. These plants have potential for use in ornamental ponds and constructed wetlands in the Southeast. The woolgrass can also be used for shoreline stabilization. We planted Indian Bayou and Leaf River in an area receiving runoff from the PMC office building septic system, and they have done very well, even though the area is heavily shaded.

Lark Selection partridge pea and Hopefield selection trailing wildbean, which were released in early spring for wildlife conservation, are being commercially increased by seed growers in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. Seed growers are optimistic about seed production this fall. We anticipate that these native, annual legumes will be available for WHIP next spring. We are gathering information and pictures for brochures on these plants for distribution to field offices in our service area by next spring. These brochures will highlight establishment and management recommendations.



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