



# Mid-South Plant News

*Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center*

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## MSPMC HAS A NEW STAFF

### Inside this issue:



#### Cover

- New Staff
- Sunflower Update

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Page

- Right of Way Project

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Page

- Silvopasture Demo
- Employees Orientation

#### Last Page

- Native Plant Spotlight



*From left to right: Jon Allison-Gardner, Paul Rodrigue-Manager, Cassie Meyer-Secretary, Tommy Moss- Agronomist, & Otis Pomerlee-Gardner*

2006 has brought two new technical staff members to the MSPMC. Paul Rodrigue, a former Resource Conservationist at the Area 4 office in Greenwood MS, took over the Manager's position in mid-February. Tommy Moss, our Research Agronomist, arrived here in January. He was previously the Landscape Director at the Mississippi State Hospital in Jackson. With our team complete, we look forward to another year of providing quality service to our customers and cooperative partners.

### Meet the New State Plant Materials Specialist



**Sherry Surette has recently joined the Ecological Sciences Staff at the State Office in Jackson. She will be providing leadership in the coordination of plant material activities for the MSPMC Service Area (parts of AL, MS, LA, AR, TN, KY, MO). Currently, she is completing her Ph.D. in Plant Ecology at the University of Mississippi in Oxford.**

### Sunflower Trial Update

Four promising black-oil sunflower varieties were evaluated along with two herbicide treatments. Varieties were evaluated using seed yield. Herbicide efficacy was evaluated by percent bare ground. Preliminary data from the 2005 trials shows one variety (Triumph FTB) outperforming the others and one herbicide treatment (Dual/Spartan/Select) showing improved results. Additional data will need to be completed to verify initial studies.

In 2006, the trial is being expanded to include 8 varieties. In addition to the PMC, the trial is being duplicated at two additional locations with help from private cooperators. The trial will be conducted at three locations again in 2007. Data will result in a sunflower dove field system best suited to Mississippi and surrounding areas. This system can then be confidently recommended to landowners by NRCS and other agency personnel.





# MSPMC Partners to Improve Wildlife Habitat Inside Holly Springs National Forest

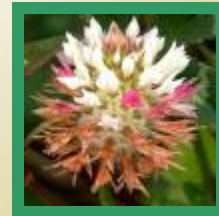
This year has seen the visible benefits of a right-of-way project that was initiated in the summer of 2004. The Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center had the opportunity to partner with several groups on a project to help improve wildlife habitat along a right-of-way located inside the Holly Springs National Forest. The project partners were made up of the National Wild Turkey Federation, U.S. Forest Service, Columbia Gulf Transmission Company, and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks. The goal of the project was to improve brood habitat for turkey hens and poults as well as benefiting other types of wildlife.

The project consisted of 12 acres scattered along the Columbia Gulf right-of-way. In late summer of 2004, tillage applications were made to smooth the area for suitable planting. Cool season annual grasses were planted and fertilized in the fall to provide for the wildlife as well as weed suppression to hold the soil until perennial & reseeding species could be established. Plans were made for warm season legumes to be utilized in the summer of 2005, 'Quail Haven' Reseeding Soybeans, and 'Lark Selection' Partridge Peas. With the dry weather, these plantings were not accomplished, but are planned for this summer.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita brought some soil moisture in early fall. To conserve this moisture, the areas were clipped two times and clover seed was no-tilled instead of planted conventionally. 'Meechee' Arrowleaf Clover, a MSPMC release was used on 6 acres of the project while the NWTF Clover Mix was used on the remaining 6 acres. Openings such as right-of-ways are key in wildlife surroundings where the majority of the land is timber.



## 'Meechee' Arrowleaf Clover



*Trifolium vesiculosum*

### MSPMC Online Publications

#### General Information:

<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/pubs/mspmcbrtrve.pdf>

#### Plant Guide:

<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/pubs/mspmcpgtrve.pdf>

#### Reseeding Methods:

<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/pubs/mspmcnl3885.pdf>



# More MSPMC Projects & News

## Silvopasture Demonstration

After the recent forest damage from hurricanes Katrina and Rita, many acres of woodland will need to be re-planted. In light of the almost total losses of timber stands, or negligible income from salvage operations, *is it advisable to put all of one's eggs in one basket again?*

Silvopasture (381) allows for the production of both timber and forage grasses and while the practice is accepted, more needs to be determined for recommendations in grass plantings. Financial information on silvopasture can be found at <http://msucare.com/forestry/special/silvo.html>.

This demonstration will evaluate long-term forage production of perennial warm season grasses in a silvopasture system.

The purpose of the study begun in 2005 is to evaluate the effect loblolly pines have on yield and quality of three perennial warm season forage grasses and mixed grasses.

'Alamo' switchgrass was no-till drilled at 8 lb PLS/acre. 'Highlander' eastern gamagrass was planted on 20" rows at a rate of 3 to 4 seed per ft, and common bermudagrass was drilled at a rate of 5 lb/acre. Stands were evaluated in July and considered successful. Plots were mowed in September of 2005.

Beginning this year, harvests will be timed to optimize yield and quality. For switchgrass use 50-60 days; eastern gamagrass-45 days; bermudagrass 35 days. The number of cuttings will be effected by rainfall conditions. Dry matter yield will be determined by cutting a swath from the center of each plot. Sub samples collected for dry matter production will be used for tissue analysis for forage quality.



Burndown before grass planting

## Presentation to NRCS Orientation for New Employees

The Delta Conservation Demonstration Center (DCDC) in Metcalfe, MS, is a designated training site for the NRCS National Employee Development Center. Cassie Meyer and Tommy Moss from the MSPMC were participants.

The ONE course is held regularly at the DCDC. A recent course in March allowed the opportunity for the MSPMC to do a presentation of the Plant Materials Program, its goals and objectives, as well as presenting some of the work done by the MSPMC.

The MSPMC looks forward to other opportunities to make presentations on the PM Program to the ONE courses, as well as other trainings held at the DCDC and *other locations within the service area.*



ONE course attendees taken 03/14/06



# Native Plant Spotlight



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## Active Releases

- 'Halifax' Maidencane
- 'Chiwapa' Japanese Millet
- 'Highlander' Eastern Gama Grass
- Hopefield Selection Trailing Wildbean
- Indian Bayou Source Powdery Thalia
- Lark Selection Partridge Pea
- Leaf River Source Wool Grass
- Leflore Source Creeping Burhead
- 'Meechee' Arrowleaf Clover
- 'Quail Haven' Reseeding Soybean
- Morton Germplasm Shrub Willow

## Wildflower Tour



June 22, 2006



## Big Bluestem *Andropogon gerardii*

Big bluestem is a warm-season perennial grass that once dominated the Tallgrass Prairie regions of North America. This is an upright, clump-forming grass reaching 4 – 8 feet in height. An adaptable species, it prefers full sun and tolerates a wide range of soil types. Its scientific name, *Andropogon*, is derived from the Greek words, andro, meaning man and pogon, meaning beard. The name refers to the fuzzy appearance of the seedhead. The species name, *gerardii*, refers to L. Gerard, the 18<sup>th</sup> century French botanist who discovered the plant.

Big bluestem is an excellent livestock forage and was an important food for the American bison. It provides nesting habitat and cover for upland birds and mammals. The caterpillars of several skipper butterflies also rely on the foliage as a food source.



<http://plants.usda.gov/>

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