



This semi-annual newsletter is published by the USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center, 14119 Broad Street, Brooksville, FL 34601-4525, Tel: 352-796-9600, FAX: 352-799-7305. E-mail: [clarence.maura@fl.usda.gov](mailto:clarence.maura@fl.usda.gov)

## Wetland Test Sites Wanted

Part of the process for releasing new plant materials for conservation use is advanced evaluation. During this phase, plantings are made on sites out in the field where they are subjected to different soil types, moisture and actual growing conditions. This process is very important in determining the areas of adaptability for the plant.

The PMC is currently looking for a few good wetland test sites on which to plant common maidencane, little blue maidencane, eastern gamagrass and chalky bluestem. For those that are not familiar with these grasses, maidencane is used for stabilization and all of them are good native forage material.

If you know of a site that would be appropriate for some of these plants please contact the PMC.

## Express Your Conservation Needs

The annual Plant Materials Technical Committee Meeting will be held March 23<sup>rd</sup> this year, via teleconference due to budget constraints. Field office personnel should contact their area committee representative and express any conservation needs or concerns they might have. Committee members are:

Dave Millard –Cocoa; Mike Jones – Bonifay;  
Greg Garvey – So. FL RC&D, Homestead;  
Ken Murray – State Office; Bill Harb – E. Palatka;  
and Jeff Woods – TTO Lake City

How can the plant materials program serve you, our customer, better? Input from the field is important in determining what additional technical information, special studies or plant materials are needed to assist you and your customers.

## Weeds and More

Check out the Univ. of FL web site for answers to your weed and pest problems (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MEMU>).

## Blue Gamas – Buffers or Landscaping

The PMC has recently released two native eastern gamagrasses that have a bluish color. One of the plants, 'St. Lucie Germplasm', has an upright growth habit and flat stiff leaves, the other, 'Martin Germplasm', has a wider lance-shaped leaf that often arches.



Both of these are exceptionally good for buffer strips and make attractive landscape plantings because of their bluish color. These plants are drought tolerant once established, and will tolerate most all types of soil.

If you would like to do a field planting of these attractive plants on one of your sites let us know.

## Plant Materials Program on Display

Each February, the University of Florida sponsors a science fair that draws hundreds of people. The PMC again this year participated by presenting a pictorial display of the work being done by our Center. Pictures included in the display were of the phosphate mined land restoration with native plants, and the beach dune revegetation at John Beasley Park in Okaloosa County.

Visitors to the booth were able to obtain various publications, including "Invite Birds to Your Home", "Florida Native Plant Collection, Production and Direct Seeding Techniques: Interim Report", Plant Materials Center brochure, information on careers with NRCS and Earth Team Volunteers. An estimated 250 persons visited our booth during the two day exhibit. Visitors included students from primary, middle, high school, college and home schooled students.

## Available Plant Material

The following is a list of plant materials available from the PMC for demonstration plantings. If you have a site you would like to try some of this material on, submit your request on form PM-9 to Plant Materials Specialist Sam Sanders. If you are not sure which plant would be best suited for your needs, just call the PMS or the PMC for assistance.

Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)  
Marshhay cordgrass (*Spartina patens*)  
Bitter panicum (*Panicum amarum*)  
Beach sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*)  
Paspalum 'Tropic Lalo' (*Paspalum hieronymii*)  
Teosinte (*Zea mexicana*)  
Vetiver grass (*Vetiveria zizanoides*)  
Limpograss (*Hemarthria altissima*)  
Maidencane (*Panicum hemitomon*)  
Eastern gamagrass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*)

## The Cream of the Crop

Many field office people helped the PMC collect lopsided indiagrass, chalky bluestem, and blue maidencane in the last few years. Collections were planted in plots at the PMC and underwent what is known as initial evaluation. Top accessions have now been selected based on one to three year performance. Eleven blue maidencane accessions displayed superior performance. Included in these are collections made by Pete Deal, Ken Lackman, and Belinda Perry (of Myakka State Park).

Several chalky bluestem accessions displayed overall superior performance. Top performers from around the state were selected, and will be combined to form one composite, for maximum genetic diversity. Collectors of half of these include Gene Fults, Cecilia Benites, Timothy Swims, Pete Deal, Ed Sheehan and James Baxter.

Lopsided indiagrass accessions varied greatly in performance from year to year. Many performed well, but none were outstanding in all areas. Maximizing genetic diversity is important for

this species since it will be used in a variety of locations throughout the state. Twenty-five accessions were selected for increase and further testing. These will be lumped into two composites, with a third very early ripening accession from Santa Rosa Co. to be grown alone. Included are collections made by Gene Fults, Cecilia Benites, Timothy Swims, Norman Porter, Fletcher Stephens, Gene Hauer, Maelo Reyes, LeRoy Crockett, Ken Lackman, and Belinda Perry.

The PMC would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the people who collected plant materials for these projects. As you can see, NRCS people in the field made a tremendous contribution towards developing superior varieties of these three native accessions. The collection you make might just be the one that has superior genetic traits needed for conservation purposes.

## Volunteers Keep Busy

The PMC is very fortunate to have dependable and efficient volunteers to help with the workload. Without them we would not be able to accomplish as much as we do in the office and in the fields.

Mary Neron helps propagate and maintain the plants in the greenhouses and shadehouse, weeding in the fields, and assists with cleaning seed. Since she has numerous planting beds with a variety of plants at her home, she is well versed in working with plants. If Mary encounters a plant she isn't familiar with, she simply gets on her home computer and does researches on it until she gets it identified.

Teena Harrison is a Co-op Student at Central FL Community College and has been very helpful in entering evaluation data and other project information into the computer. She has recently undertaken the updating of the PMC Visitor Guide. This includes locating pictures, scanning and editing them, and writing the text explaining various plants and the work being done here. She has done a great job. Occasionally you'll also see her counting seed for germination tests.

Thanks for your help Mary & Teena.