Statesline **PMC Impact**

Newsletter from the Plant Materials Center, Brooksville, Florida **June 1995**

Mined Land Reclamation

The new year started out looking to be an interesting one, with coastal dune and gully plantings to prepare for, sprayfield research projects to coordinate, as well as continuing evaluation and production of the 30 plus plant species grown at the center - it was business as usual. In March, the pace accelerated, as the PMC took over the FIPR (Florida Institute of Phosphate Research) upland native plant mined land revegetation project. Seed cleaning equipment roared and belched dust, cleaning the light fluffy seed of the native lopsided indiangrass and wiregrass; and wrenches turned bolts on planters, to prepare for a series of research plantings. The next step was to determine how to plant this material, even though cleaning removes the awns, the seed will not feed through an ordinary grain drill. Three methods were used, broadcasting, drilling, and a plug mix planter (plants a plug of potting mix/seed). Plots were planted at the PMC in early May, a second set planted on IMC-Agrico reclaimed mined lands near Bartow in late May, and a third set will be planted on Cargill reclaimed minelands near Bartow in June. We are hoping this project will provide valuable information on how to establish native grasses. A special thanks to Ed Sheehan, DC of the Bartow FO, for helping us to coordinate and plant these projects.

Eastern Gamagrass Study

Eastern gamagrass is a warm season perennial that is highly palatable to livestock, and produces a large volume of forage. The Brooksville PMC has spent several years evaluating a collection of gamagrasses gathered from throughout FL. Three of these collections surfaced as having superior growth and forage production. These three selections have been put into a multi-PMC trial for the Southern region. Selections from Texas, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and New Mexico were also entered. Plants were exchanged this spring and planted at each center. After having a year to establish, PMC staff will begin clipping and evaluating plants for forage production in 1996.

Dedication Services

May 25, 1995 the Americus, GA PMC dedicated the new office/conference building and renamed the facility in honor of former President Jimmy Carter. The Brooksville PMC Manager, Clarence Maura, Jr. and the Florida PMS, Sam Sanders attended the ceremony and assisted with a portion of the guest tour of the center. They explained the role of 'Flageo' and 'Sharp' marshhay cordgrass, native grasses used for gully and dune stabilization. The grasses were co-released with the GA PMC.

In the speech given by Mr. Carter, he stated he had been asked to put his name on many other things but choose the NRCS PMC because of the beneficial work being done for agriculture.

Bitter panicum

The two selections of this native warm season coarse perennial grass (Northpa and Southpa), publicly released by the Brooksville PMC, have continued to gain popularity in solving erosion problems. Commercial growers, and other PMCs, have requested thousands of these plants. The US Army Corp of Engineers have specified Southpa as one of the plants for the large revegetation project along the GA and SC coast.

These panicum, originally developed for beach/dune stabilization, are also doing well stabilizing gullies here in North FL. Plant Materials Centers in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Puerto Rico also report good performance with these plants at their locations.

Beach Plantings

The beautification, revegetation, and stabilization of John Beasley Park in Okaloosa County, is a success story we, the DC Darryl Williams, and all others associated with it, are very proud of. This beach site was practically barren of vegetation, and sand dunes were eroding away. Local residents felt it was a waste of time and money trying to get plants to survive on this site. Spartina patens, Panicum amarum, beach sunflower, native blanket flower, sea oats, and lantana were some of the materials used on this site. After a year, the dune had started to re-build, and the area around the pavilion had better than an 80% cover of lush greenery and beautiful flowers.

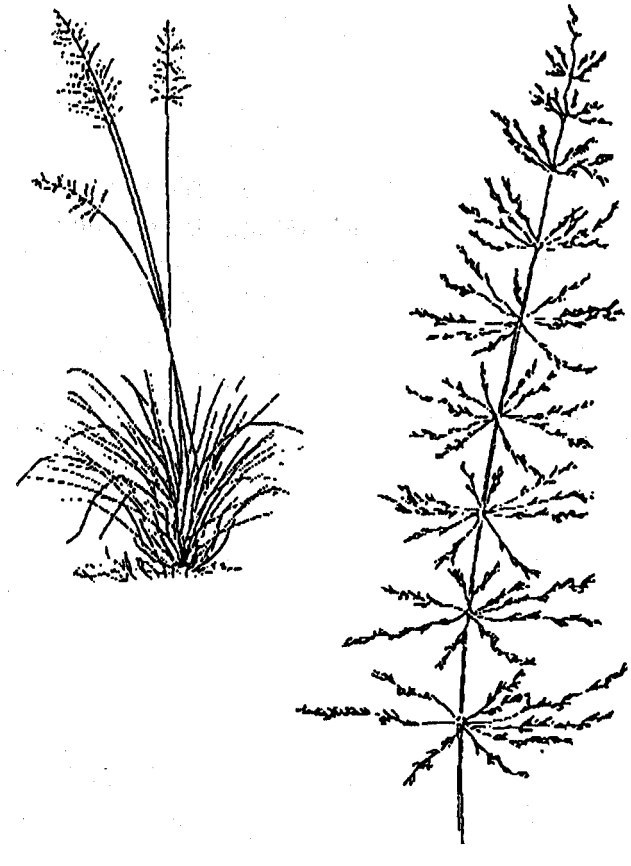
Historical Facts

The plant materials program in Florida began as a nursery, sub-office of the Americus, GA Plant Materials Center, in 1945. After several commercial nurseries complained, (they felt it was unfair competition to them) the nursery was closed. During 1956 plans had been formulated for the establishment of a Plant Materials Center. In 1957 the operation was moved on to 60 acres of leased land in Arcadia.

The 182 acres of the current site was originally part of the 5,000 acre Subtropical Agricultural Research Station, which had been donated to USDA by Col. and Mrs. Raymond Robbins in 1932. In 1967 the property was acquired from ARS and the operation was returned to Brooksville. A meager $10,000. budget was allocated to relocate, clear wooded areas, and erect buildings for the center.

Seed Collections

To expand the FIPR research project, we would like to collect seed from five native grass species this year. Four of the five, beaked panicum (Panicum anceps), hairy panicum (Panicum rhizomatum), lopsided indiangrass (Sorghastrum secundum), and wiregrass (Aristida stricta) seed are ripe Oct-Nov. Pinewoods dropseed (Sporobolus junceus) ripens earlier in the summer. If you know of a site in Central Florida, drop us a line or give us a call. We would greatly appreciate help locating and collecting these five species.



Sporobolus junceus, pineywoods dropseed