Sunshine State's **PMC Impact**

Newsletter from the Plant Materials Center, Brooksville, Florida

December 1997

Coastal Release Grows Inland

The *Panicum amarum's* (Northpa and Southpa) released by the Brooksville PMC for beach and sand dune stabilization, have been in great demand. The **US** Corp. of Engineers have chosen these cultivars for their east coast beach restoration project. Now these plants are proving their adaptability to non-coastal sites that are in need of stabilization. Eglin Air Force Base, in the FL Panhandle, contains several critical area sites that are being successfully stabilized with these grasses.

Eglin A.F.B. is in the process of restoring other critical area sites using species native to their area. The PMC is assisting them by harvesting wiregrass *(Aristida stricta)* sites on Eglin and will then grow the seedlings at the Center. Lopsided indiangrass *(Sorghastrum secundum)* and test plots of various other native species will be installed to determine the most desirable plants for restoring these critical areas.

Our Native American Neighbor

On November 6, in observance of Native American Heritage, the Brooksville PMC invited Ken Stewert to speak to us on his native American heritage. Ken, a descendant of the Cherokee people, works **as** a mechanic at the nearby Agriculture Beef Cattle Research Station. Ken gave a very informative talk on the social and governing structures, religious philosophies and customs of his people. He dispelled several myths concerning the Indian nations.

We had long known Ken **as** a good neighbor we could call upon if we were having trouble repairing our equipment. Learning about his cultural background was an enriching experience for all of us.

Native Grasses Update

The lopsided indiangrass *(Sorghastrum secundum)* accessions planted in January of 1997 at the PMC, have performed so well that many even produced seed this fall. There are marked differences in the performance of the accessions, and evaluations will continue for two more years to observe persistence and seed production.

Chalky bluestem (*Andropogon virginicus* var. *gluacus*), another of the native grasses. collected in 1996, was direct seeded in field plots in February of this year. Overall performance was very good, almost all accessions which emerged produced seed heads. These evaluations will also continue for two more years before candidates are selected for advanced evaluation.

Again in October of this year we took our tractor and the Flail-Vac seed harvester a few miles North of the PMC to Fort Cooper State Park and harvested lopsided indiangrass. Then in November we went down to Avon Park Air Force Bombing Range and again harvested wiregrass there. Seed will be used for more research plantings on the minedlands. The Forest Service is especially interested in our work with wiregrass because they feel it is an important part of their burn management program for the forest areas.

Some of you have asked us about collecting more indiangrass and chalky bluestem accessions in your county. We wanted to let you know we are not adding any more collections to our assembly since we are already well into the evaluation phase of our cultivar development programs. Thanks for keeping us in mind, and we certainly appreciate your help with our present assemblies.

Blue maidencane (*Amphicarpum muhlenbergianum)* and hairawn muhly *(Muhlenbergiacapillaris)* are currently being

assembled. Thus far, blue maidencane has been collected from 34 of the 67 counties in Florida. We hope to complete our assembly early in 1998. Muhly has been collected from over 29 counties. We would like to obtain collections from every county in Florida if possible. The PMC is very grateful to the field office personnel who assisted us with collections this year. For those who took to the field with us, we want to extend a special thank you. Even if we could not find any stands from which to collect, we still appreciate your efforts.

Switchgrass Trial Shows Promise

The Florida native switchgrasses released by the PMC (Miami, Stuart and Wabasso) have had one major drawback in getting them into the commercial market. Viable seed production typically is very poor, therefore they have to be propagated vegetatively. In 1996 we placed 'Miami' and 'Stuart' source plants together in a crossing block, hoping to stimulate seed production. The results: a significant amount of hard seed was produced. Study will continue, but crossing these two releases shows promise for increased seed production in Florida for this versatile species.

Student's Project A Success

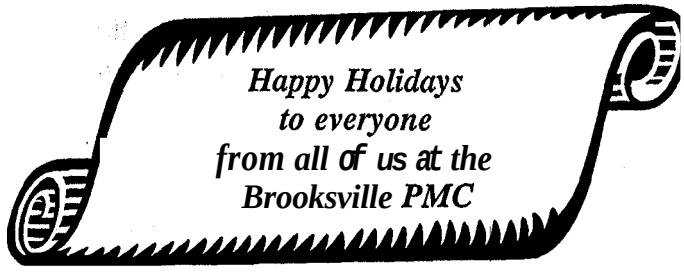
In 1996, students from Spring Hill Elementary School planted lopsided indiangrass, provided by the PMC, on a reclaimed mine site here in Hernando County. Students, teachers and mine reclamation staff were very pleased with the establishment success of the native seedlings. Birds and other wildlife were able to'enjoy the many seedheads produced from this planting.

The PMC provided the class with additional vegetative planting material of perennial peanut and more lopsided indiangrass for this site during 1997.

1997 PMC Distance Award

How do you thank someone who has gone way above and beyond their duty? In 1996, the PMC staff wanted to thank Gene Fults and his staff for making so many collections of native plant materials. Along with a big "thank you" we also sent him a "distance award," a certificate that expressed our appreciation to him for "going the extra mile."

In 1997 we again have an individual who has been a tremendous help to us and definitely warrants a "distance award." First a little background, the PMC is currently conducting a water quality study in cooperation with the Marion S&WCD and the City of Ocala. The purpose of the study is to evaluate forage plant materials for nutrient uptake in a municipal waste water environment. Plant materials were established in 1996. All species established very well, and we began sampling the plots in 1997. Stephanie Daugherty, a District Technician in the Ocala Field Office has been a tremendous help to us in this project. She has put in endless hours with us during 1997 alone. She was always a cheerful enthusiastic helper even on those hot humid summer days. When we had to hoe weeds, she still readily volunteered to come out and help us. Thank you Steph for being a real friend to the PMC -- and going beyond an extra mile.



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