

USDA, NRCS
PLANT
MATERIALS
PROGRAM

**POINTS
OF
INTEREST**

* **New Study for
Booneville in
2008**

* **17th Annual
FFA Field Day**

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BOONEVILLE PLANT PRESS

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BIO-MASS COMPARISON STUDY

Plants and more plants line the greenhouse at the Booneville Plant Materials Center. With winter behind us and spring all around, it is time to head to the fields of the Booneville Plant Materials Center to begin spring plantings for a Bio-Mass Comparison Study.

Four grass species will be tested in the Bio-Mass study: switchgrass, big bluestem, *miscanthus giganteus* (common name: Giant Chinese silvergrass) and *saccaarum giganteum* (common name: Sugar Cane Plume grass).

Dry-matter production information for various perennial grass species is important to determine which species has the greatest potential as a source for producing bio-mass which can be converted into cellulosic ethanol. Several studies have been conducted to evaluate the production of switchgrass and big bluestem. Miscanthus and scaarum are tall growing plants which produce an abundance of stems and leaves and indicate a potential for large quantities of dry matter production. There is little bio-mass production information available on these two species. All four species will be planted and managed under controlled conditions. Data on total annual bio-mass yield will be recorded, along with stem to leaf ratios for each species. The initial harvests will begin in mid May of 2009. The PMC staff will collect yield data from this study for 4 years. Data collected will not only reflect annual biomass yield, but disease and insect problems, drought tolerance, seedling vigor, plus seed yield and quality. The results gained will provide information on which species has potential for the greatest amount of annual biomass production.



17th Annual FFA Field Day

The seventeenth annual FFA Field Day was held in Booneville on March 11, 2008. The competition was hosted by the Booneville Plant Materials Center, the South Logan County Fair Board, and the Dale Bumpers Small Farm Research Center.

Forty-eight schools with over 750 students from northwestern and southwestern Arkansas participated. The event is held each year to give student the opportunity to hone their skills in events such as identifying seed, plants, floriculture and soils, judging poultry, crops and livestock, just to name a few. High school Agricultural Instructors find this training to be a very beneficial tool for students to prepare for future events.

After the Booneville training event students will attend the Regional Contest held at Arkansas Tech University in Russellville, Arkansas. Winners from Tech will go on to the State Championship which is held at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

Volunteers from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, local Conservation Districts, Agricultural Research Service, Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts, Arkansas Forestry Commission, U.S. Forest Service, County Farm Bureaus, and the Cattleman's Association give their time, money and experience to host the event. This also includes a free lunch to all in attendance.

We hope to continue the event as new students come along who want to find their place in American agriculture.

If you would like additional information call us at 479-675-5182.



FFA students judging a variety of seed.

Mission Statement of NRCS

The mission of the Natural Resources Conservation (NRCS) Plant Materials Program (PM) is to develop, test, and transfer effective state-of-the-art plant science technology to meet customer and resource needs. NRCS PM activities are consistent with the objectives of the current United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and NRCS Strategic Plans (Exhibit 539-1), namely to provide timely and effective vegetative solutions for identified resource needs.



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