

Manhattan Plant Materials Center

Manhattan, Kansas



A newsletter in support of the Plant Materials Program for Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma

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What's New With PLANTS

The USDA's highly touted web site, PLANTS (<http://plants.usda.gov>), was recently recognized as one of the top 10 of all federal government web sites. Selection criteria were based on web sites that provide customers with useful and easily accessible information, promotes new technologies, and facilitates governmental operations.

Over the past few months PLANTS has made several improvements and additions. PLANTS has expanded its database to include photos of over 2800 plants. Fact sheets have been developed for hundreds of plant species. A new Invasive and Noxious Plants module has been added that offers thousands of links to information about invasive weed control and management, ecology, and identification.

A Culturally Significant Plants module offers over 30 new plant guides on plants used by different cultures within the US and its territories. The Federal Threatened and Endangered status as determined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been completely updated and is available through the T&E module. Finally, links to plant information of many types have been completely revised, and are now categorized for easier access.

If you have questions about any type of plant related issue, this web site would be a good place to start.

ARS-NRCS Cooperative Study

The Manhattan Plant Center is a cooperator in an effort initiated by Dr. Tim Springer, Research Agronomist, Southern Plains Range Research Station, Woodward, OK, to study the seed and forage production on experimental lines of big and sand bluestems and eastern gamagrass. The plots were established May 1st and 2nd with seedlings that Dr. Springer transported from Woodward to Manhattan. Four experimental lines of eastern gamagrass and two experimental lines each of big bluestem and sand bluestem will be evaluated for potential release from the ARS program. The big bluestem plots contain 'Kaw' as a standard of comparison and the eastern gamagrass plots contain 'Pete' seedlings for comparison. The replicated plots were watered several times to encourage growth and to sustain the seedlings through the hot, dry period of summer. There were few losses from the evaluation plots even though the summer and fall were uncharacteristically hot and dry. Actual data collection will be initiated during the next growing season. This cooperative study involves at least 7 additional Plant Centers, Oklahoma State University, and The Southern Plains Range Research Station.

Kansas State Garden

The Horticulture, Forestry and Recreation Resources Department at Kansas State University has committed time and resources to establish the Kansas State University Gardens. The three phase plan for the gardens is currently progressing ahead of schedule and phase one should be completed soon. Phase one involved converting part of an old dairy barn into a visitors' center. A section of the gardens will feature adaptive native prairie plants of the Midwest. A recent tour of the gardens by Manhattan PMC personnel led to discussions of native plants with Garden Director, Scott McElwain. Center Staff offered to assist the garden staff with native plant selection, propagation and the potential to use released plants from the Plant Materials Program. Hopefully, the gardens will provide another avenue to introduce the general public to the conservation work accomplished by Plant Materials. The KSU Gardens will eventually include 12 acres and are scheduled for completion in 2010. The next two phases of the garden will involve a tiered lake system with water gardens. When the gardens are completed they should be quite an attraction and provide a lot of pleasure for plant enthusiasts.

Field Plantings

At our Nebraska State Plant Materials Committee meeting, questions were raised about field plantings; specifically what are they, why are they carried out, and how does one know what plants are being evaluated?

Field plantings, as the name implies, are plantings that take place in the field as opposed to plantings that take place at plant materials centers. The purpose of field

plantings is to evaluate the conservation potential of new or unproven plant materials under actual use conditions.

Field plantings are established in different locations under a variety of soils, climatic conditions, and land uses. Field office personnel carry out periodic evaluations in order to document planting success or failure. The Manhattan Plant Materials Center relies on members of the state plant materials committees to help locate proper sites on to which to establish these plantings.

To find out what plant species are currently being evaluated and what future evaluations are planned, check in the Manhattan Plant Materials Annual Report. This report is distributed to all field offices and other partners. Contact me at (785)823-4541 or e-mail at <mailto:terry.conway@ks.usda.gov> if there are any other questions.

Terry Conway, Plant Materials Specialist



Quote: "Use only what you need. Give back more than you take. Leave a place better than the way you found it. Everything is alive; respect it as you would want your own life respected."

—Walter Wood
(lifelong environmentalist)