

Manhattan Plant Materials Center



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

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New Studies

Two new field studies and a PMC study were approved at the last State Conservationists' Advisory Committee Meeting on September 13, 2005. These studies will address resource concerns that are identified in the states long-range plan.

The first is a Kansas field study that will be evaluating several conifer species as alternatives to Eastern redcedar. Identified species include, but not limited to; Arizona cypress, native to southwest United States; and Modoc cypress, native to northwest United States. Both Arizona cypress and Modoc cypress will be field planted in a tree and shrub planting in western Kansas and at the Manhattan, Plant Materials Center for evaluation.

During the study, these conifers will be evaluated for establishment, disease resistance, adaptability for windbreaks, and potential for spread. Both of these conifers have some potential in Kansas. Initial thought is that Modoc cypress may be a little more adapted to Kansas, primarily due to the climate.

The second is an Oklahoma field study that will look at the plant teff in a comparison field planting. Teff is the common name for an annual lovegrass that originates from Africa and Europe. In these regions teff is grown for grain and is also used as a forage crop for livestock. The primary purpose in the comparison field planting is to determine the adaptability, potential production, and cost effectiveness of teff in comparison to other forages adapted to the area.

The study being conducted at the PMC will involve the species big sandreed (*Calamovilfa gigantea*) and will attempt to increase the seedling vigor and establishment characteristics of this native grass. This grass species is known for weak seedling vigor and slow establishment. This combination of traits makes a grass a poor performer and subsequently will not be widely grown for commercial production. Without commercial production the release will eventually fail and not be available for use in conservation practices.

These studies will take several years to complete. Results from the studies will be published in technical notes and other supportive publications. Depending on the outcome of the study, results may also be incorporated into the electronic Field Office Technical Guide.

Arborvitae Update

Oriental arborvitae, *Platycladus orientalis*, seed collections were made in the early 1980's. Each collection was assigned an accession number before growing out the seed. In 1983, seedling trees were planted in Field Evaluation Plantings (FEP) at a number of locations across the Great Plains Region. Successful plantings were established at Woodward, Oklahoma, Manhattan, Kansas, and Knox City, Texas. Many of the collections were introductions obtained through the National Plant Materials Center, Beltsville, Maryland. However, greater than 50 percent of the collections were made by Soil Conservation Service employees who collected seed from arborvitae growing around farmstead windbreaks, cemeteries, and city parks in Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma. The trees have been evaluated now for more than twenty years. Out of all the hard work of establishing, evaluating, and the efforts of many to collect seed, four tentative selections have emerged based heavily on the Woodward FEP with supporting data from Manhattan. Four tentative selections are:

Rank	Accession	Origin	Collector
1	9013575	Harlan Co., Nebr.	Garen Sailors
2	9026610	Beaver Co., Okla.	Steve Chessmore and Delbert Taber
3	9013579	Rooks Co., Kans.	Kenneth Currie
4	9019853	Woodward Co., Okla.	James Shearhart

Central Regional Plant Materials Workshop

A Central Regional Plant Materials Workshop is being organized by Joel Douglas, Central Regional Plant Materials Specialist, to be held in Manhattan, Kansas on the week of November 14th.

The objectives of the workshop are to improve communications and coordination between Plant Centers and Specialists, define the role of the Plant Materials Program on various conservation issues, facilitate information exchange and provide training. An agenda has been drafted that will involve all of the Plant Centers in the region along with experts in Agronomy, Range, Public Relations, Library Science, and GIS/Arc View applications for the PM Program. The agenda will also include a panel discussion on the role of the Plant Materials Program in conservation planning and farm bill implementation. A training session on POMS (Plant Materials Operations and Management System) will be held on Wednesday afternoon. A tour of the Manhattan PMC is also planned for Wednesday with an evening meal catered at the Center by Famous Dave's Bar-B-Q of Manhattan. Break out sessions on Thursday will allow for Centers and Specialists to coordinate activities between and among themselves. A meeting wrap up will follow the breakout sessions and Joel Douglas will provide the last word and proceedings for the meeting at a later date.

Plant Materials Advisory Committee

On September 13, 2005, state conservationists, state resource conservationists, plant materials specialists, and the Manhattan Plant Materials Center (PMC) staff attended the annual State Conservationists' Advisory Committee Meeting at the Manhattan, PMC. States represented included: Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas.

The purpose of this committee is to provide leadership in the coordination, communication, support, and integration of applied plant science technology within and between states, Regional and National Plant Materials Advisory committees, and other partners.

Responsibilities of the committee include;

- Provide leadership in the integration of all program activities into one process for technology development.
- Ensure that identified priority resource needs and actions are included in the state strategic plan.
- Review and approve the Plant Materials Center (PMC), Long-Range Plan (LRP).
- Review and approve PMC studies and activities to address the needs in the state and PMC LRP.

Items of discussion from the advisory meeting included:

- Joel Douglas, NRCS, Central Region Plant Materials Specialist, from the Natural Technology Support Center in Fort Worth, Texas, shared with the committee National PMP perspectives, followed by a discussion on technology development.
- Review of studies at the PMC.
- Review of field studies.
- Reviewed the draft Kansas Plant Materials LRP which has been updated. Oklahoma and Nebraska LRP update is scheduled for revision in 2006.
- The committee approved two new field studies and one new PMC study.
- Native American outreach

In summary the State Conservationists' Advisory Committee oversees the operation and direction of the Manhattan, PMC.

Employee Training

Jerry Longren, Biological Technician, attended the one week "Orientation for New Employees" (ONE) course delivered by the National Employee Development Center. The one week course was held at the Arbor Day Lodge in Nebraska City, Nebraska from September 19-23, 2005. Each participant had to give a 5 minute presentation on "Their responsibilities and duties performed for NRCS". Jerry provided the audience with a quick overview of the life of a Biological Technician at the Plant Materials Center. Jerry indicated that he enjoyed the training and met a lot of good folks from other states.

Don Garwood and Jerry Longren participated in a pesticide applicators training course in Salina, Kansas on October 3, 2005. The course was titled "Integrated Pest Management and Pesticide Safety Education" and was provided by Kansas State University division of Continuing Education. This course is one of two that Don and Jerry will need to complete to be recertified as pesticide applicators. They need to be certified in order to purchase restricted use pesticides and apply pesticides in the State of Kansas.