

2007 Plant Materials Program Awards

Thank you to all who participated in this year's award nominations. First, I would like to recognize our distinguished judges and thank them for participating in our effort for the 3rd year in a row:

Ben Smallwood, National Pest Management Specialist, Wash, DC
Julie Hawkins, State Biologist, Virginia
Jeff Burwell, SRC, Colorado

And now, the winners by category:

Plant Materials Outstanding Team

This award is presented in recognition of the best overall performance by a plant materials center, plant materials specialist, and associated program over the past year.

The **Kika de la Garza Plant Materials Center (STPMC)** has become one of the most productive PMC programs in the nation. John Reilley, Shelly Maher, Albert Quiroga, and George Farek have done a commendable job in developing an effective program built on a quality plant selection process and partnerships leading to the advancement of plant science technology for conservation of natural resources in South Texas. John has cultivated an outstanding working relationship with Texas A&M Kingsville, Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Texas Agriculture Experiment Station at Beeville, and the South Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts. These relationships have produced nine native grass releases in the past two years. In 2007, the STPMC produced 29 scientific documents, 17 popular documents, gave 14 presentations at local, regional and national meetings and provided assistance to over 400 customers on plant materials related issues. The PMC ranked as the number one producing PMC in 2006 and 2007. In fact, in 2007 the PMC scored a perfect 100% on the performance index. The PMC staff is committed to producing high quality plant materials products for the South Texas Plains and Gulf Coast.

Plant Materials Outstanding Employee

This award is presented to the Plant Materials employee who has demonstrated excellent leadership and skill in contributing to the Plant Materials Program over the last year. **No entries were submitted for FY2007.**

Plant Materials Meritorious Service

This award is presented to a Plant Materials employee who has made a significant and tangible contribution to the discipline over a long period of time.

The winner for this year is **Nancy Jensen**, agronomist, Bismarck Plant Materials Center. She has been a driving force in many of the accomplishments of the Bismarck PMC since she started in 1989. Nancy is an innovative individual and always looking for the most efficient and effective way to accomplish a task. She has a special knack in communicating with tour groups and at workshops, especially with youth, and in providing a practical hands-on experience whenever possible. **A sample of her accomplishments and contributions over the last 18 years include the following:**

- ❖ Nancy's writing skills are exceptional. She is in demand by other staff to review written documents and add her expertise to the final product. She is the lead author on the Herbaceous Section of the Technical Report (more than 200 pages) and has assisted in the preparation of dozens of brochures and other documents.

- ❖ Her strong technical background and previous experience working in a seed lab provide a solid foundation for the responsibilities of working with more than 30 foundation seed fields from inspection through seed processing.
- ❖ Nancy does most of the greenhouse propagation at the PMC and her ability to get just about anything to grow and look good is well known. She is responsible for growing sweetgrass and white sage plants used for the American Indian outreach program.
- ❖ Numerous field office demonstration plantings in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota are established each year with her assistance. For example, two large demonstration plantings were planted last year in South Dakota. They were seeded with a small plot cone seeder requiring the preparation of more than 2500 individual seed packets. Nancy procured the seed and organized the planting plan of the more than 100 plots.
- ❖ She has provided leadership in numerous major seed collections and in the establishment of nurseries for individual plant evaluations.
- ❖ Nancy provides coordination for all of the more than 3,000 pounds of foundation seed grown at the Bismarck PMC. She prepares seed for shipment and handles the paperwork for the seed growers, PMC, and North Dakota State University Foundation Seedstocks Program.

These major accomplishments have contributed significantly to the overall success of the plant materials program at Bismarck. Nancy's commitment to the program and ability to handle a large workload in an efficient and expert manner has had a tangible impact on the plant materials service provided to the field offices in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota.

Plant Materials Special Service

This award is presented to a non-plant materials person, either within NRCS or outside the agency whose efforts have or are substantially advancing the plant materials program.

There is one winner for 2007.

Niles Glasgow, former State Conservationist in Florida and now State Conservationist in South Carolina, has been a strong supporter of the NRCS Plant Materials Program at both the national and local level for a number of years. On a continuous basis, he has briefed both the Chief and the Deputy for Science and Technology on the Plant Materials Program stressing its importance and needs. As a result, he was asked to coordinate the Task Force for Plant Materials in 1999-2000. This Task Force was instrumental in the creation of the National Plant Materials Advisory Committee for which Niles has served as chair since its creation. As part of this national committee, Niles spearheaded many of the Plant Materials marketing and awareness initiatives, and has been involved in the development of the Plant Materials strategic plan and preparation of issue papers. He has personally been instrumental in increasing the awareness of other State Conservationists about the program, and Niles' involvement was critical to getting a Congressional earmark (the Oregon Garden) removed from CO-46 and reassigned to CO-01 a few years ago.

At the local level, Niles' commitment to the Plant Materials Program has been evidenced by major equipment and infrastructure renovations at the Brooksville Plant Materials Center. In recent years, this has included such mission critical items as replacing the antiquated 1960s model combine, the doubling of useful greenhouse space by the replacement of an obsolete fiberglass greenhouse, and the installation of backup generators for the buildings and greenhouses.

Plant Materials Notable Achievement

This award is presented for efforts by an individual in completion of a specific plant materials product or specific activity.

We have two winners in 2007: Mary "Mimi" Williams and Leslie Glass

Mary "Mimi" Williams, Plant Materials Specialist, Florida, updated a major dune publication entitled "Native Plants for Coastal Dune Restoration: What, When and How for Florida". The publication, which was first published in 1991 by NRCS, was expanded to include 33 different plant species consisting of grasses, herbaceous, trees, and shrubs. The publication features pictures of plants common to Florida dunes, the plant's area of occurrence in Florida, and establishment and management protocols for using plants effectively in a dune system. The publication is written and designed for homeowners, municipalities, consultants, and others interested in establishing, enhancing, maintaining or repairing dunes. The publication serves as the prototype for a future regional coastal restoration publication for the South Atlantic, Gulf Coast, and Caribbean. Hard copies of the publication have been printed and the publication is available on the Florida NRCS web site or the National Plant Materials Program web site.

Leslie Glass is the Secretary for the Bismarck Plant Materials Center, North Dakota (NDPMC) and Webmaster for the Plant Material Program Web site. During 2007, from approximately April 15 – December 15, Leslie was involved in extensive clean-up, reorganization, updating, and documenting of the PM Web site. Specifically, she was responsible for the following:

- ❖ Cleaning up the site of broken links, errant web code, and outdated information. Much of this work has been on her initiative and was more extensive than realized.
- ❖ Improving Section 508 accessibility (for the visually impaired) of Web information. This includes the development of several guides to help PMCs prepare Section 508 accessible documents for the web.
- ❖ Updating the content of plant releases and PM publications to make more information available to NRCS field offices, conservation partners and the public.
- ❖ Preparing the Web site for Web migration to the new platform. This included fully documenting the content of the Web site and providing additional clean-up on the Web site in the process. The Web migration documentation included characterizing thousands of web pages and document files. Leslie spent countless hours completing this task (some on her own time).

Without Leslie's efforts the Plant Materials Web site would not have progressed as far as it has. Leslie's activities with the Web site have also had a direct correlation with the number of users of the site. Visitor sessions to the site hit an all-time high of 96,546 in July 2007, up from 49,710 in July 2006. Plant Materials documents (PDF publications) being accessed from the site hit an average of 90,000 per month for FY 2007 (it was less than half that for FY 2006). This is astounding progress, due mostly to Leslie's initiative and efforts.

I was hoping to distribute the awards in person, but my travel budget won't permit it. We are in the process of preparing awards for the winners and will provide them as soon as possible. I want you to know I appreciate your efforts and the Program is better because of you.

Keep up the good work, and together, we shall continue to solve conservation problems.

Bob Escherman
National Program Leader-Plant Materials