

# Bismarck Plant Materials Program

## Tribal Conservation Technical Assistance

The USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Program helps provide plant solutions for conservation needs. Many of today's environmental challenges can be addressed through the use of plants. Many native plant species have traditional uses that are culturally significant to American Indians. The Plant Materials Program can provide information, plants, and technology to assist Tribal conservation efforts.

A network of 27 Plant Materials Centers (PMCs) provides the foundation to accomplish this task. The PMC, located at Bismarck, North Dakota, serves Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Each of the three States operates through long-range plans. State plant materials committees meet annually to approve plant materials requests and develop action items for the coming year. Committee members include PMC staff, State NRCS staff, Tribal liaisons, conservation district staff, and various partners.

The Bismarck PMC, working through each State's plant materials committee, has been active in recent years in providing plants to Tribal communities and individual cooperators for evaluation, demonstration, and propagation purposes. Field plantings are formal evaluations where NRCS field offices collect data from the planting sites for a three- to five-year period. The information is compiled in a database at the Bismarck PMC and new conservation plants and the technology to use them is developed.

The plant materials specialist position is part of the State office staff at Bismarck, North Dakota. This position provides coordination for the Plant Materials Program and all seed and plant materials needs of each State. The office phone number is (701) 530-2075. The state resource conservationist of the State office staff in Bismarck, North Dakota, has overall leadership responsibilities for the three-State Plant Materials Program. The office phone number is (701) 530-2084.

**Requesting Plant Materials:** Information regarding availability of plant materials is sent out annually with the fall issue of *Plant Chat*, a quarterly electronic newsletter from the Bismarck PMC. Field planting requests require the completion of a signed one-page ECS-9. Completion of the form or a letter of request is also encouraged for special (demonstration) plantings. Plant materials requests should originate from the local field office or Tribal liaison position and be sent to the local plant materials chairperson. Requests for field plantings must be submitted prior to each State's annual plant materials committee meeting held every winter season.

Visitors are always welcome at the Bismarck Plant Materials Center. The PMC is co-located with Lincoln-Oakes Nurseries south of Bismarck across from the United Tribes Technical College at:

USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center  
3308 University Drive  
Bismarck, ND 58504  
Phone (701) 250-4330

The Plant Materials Program website provides technical information available from the PMCs (<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>). Cultural plant information and numerous other links can be found in the Plants database (<http://plants.usda.gov>).

## Helping People Help the Land

The authority for NRCS to provide technical assistance to Tribal cooperators is through various Public Laws, Executive Orders, and Memorandums. The foundation of the government-to-government relationship between the United States and Indian Tribes is the United States Constitution, treaties, and other laws involving American Indians and Alaska Natives, including case law.

# Minnesota

## Plant Materials Tribal Conservation Assistance

Recent plantings for Tribal demonstration and trial propagation purposes include the culturally significant plant species of sweetgrass (*Hierochloa odorata*) and white sage (*Artemisia ludoviciana*). Technical assistance provides plant information and plant materials distribution to 11 reservations, the White Earth Tribal Conservation District, four Tribal colleges, reservation-based non-profits, and Tribal cooperators.

The Minnesota plant materials committee is comprised of members from seven different areas. The annual meeting is usually held during the second week in December. The agronomist of the NRCS State office staff in St. Paul is the primary plant materials contact person. The office phone number is (651) 602-7866.

**Highlights:** Primary activities with American Indian partners have been special plantings of sweetgrass and white sage. Field plantings include American black currant (*Ribes americanum*), fireberry hawthorn (*Crataegus chrysoarpa*), and Amur chokecherry (*Prunus maackii*). Lakeshore erosion has been stabilized with the installation of ‘Silver Sands’ sandbar willow (*Salix exigua*) and ‘Survivor’ false indigo (*Amorpha fruticosa*). Presentations, tours, and demonstration plantings have been conducted at Mille Lacs Reservation, White Earth Reservation, Red Lake Reservation, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, and Fond du Lac Reservation.

### NRCS Tribal Coordinator Offices

Center of Excellence  
Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College  
Cloquet, MN  
(218) 879-0863

NRCS Tribal Natural Resources  
Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians  
Red Lake, MN  
(218) 679-3959

NRCS White Earth Natural Resources Department  
White Earth Band of Ojibwe  
Ponsford, MN  
(218) 573-3842

*“The PMC has been an icebreaker for initiating assistance with the Tribes. The importance of re-establishing plants in a native environment is at the heart of the Tribal people, and it impacts the health of the community, physically and mentally.”*

– David Wise  
NRCS Tribal Liaison  
Cloquet, Minnesota



*“Culturally significant demonstration plantings give the NRCS an excellent opportunity to make new contacts with non-traditional clientele. Tribal cooperators share their stories and good working relations with their friends and neighbors.”*

– Dustin Jasken  
NRCS Tribal Liaison  
Ponsford, Minnesota



Plants for a demonstration planting at Mille Lacs Reservation



Outdoor classroom at Fond du Lac Reservation



White sage trial at White Earth Reservation

# North Dakota

## Plant Materials Tribal Conservation Assistance

The North Dakota plant materials committee is comprised of members from three different areas. The annual meeting is usually held the first week in December. The plant materials specialist of the NRCS State office staff in Bismarck is the primary plant materials contact person. The office phone number is (701) 530-2075.

**Highlights:** The primary activities with American Indian partners have been trial plantings of sweetgrass and white sage. Tribal members from Three Affiliated Tribes assisted in seed collection of *Echinacea angustifolia*. Native grass plants and wildflower seed were provided for a demonstration planting at the local community gardens on the Fort Berthold Reservation. United Tribes Technical College, which is adjacent to the Bismarck PMC, has used the PMC facilities for workshops and plant identification training. Presentations and/or demonstration plantings have been conducted at the Standing Rock Reservation, Sitting Bull College, Turtle Mountain Reservation, Fort Berthold Reservation, and Circle of Nations School.

*“The Bismarck Plant Materials Center has been instrumental in providing native plant assistance to the Anishinaube Learning, Cultural, and Wellness Center at the Turtle Mountain Community College. Also, more than 30 plantings of sweetgrass provided by the Plant Materials Program have been established by the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa for spiritual as well as cultural purposes.”*

– Chick LaRocque  
NRCS Resource Conservationist  
Rolla, North Dakota

### NRCS Tribal Coordinator Offices

Turtle Mountain Community College  
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa  
Belcourt, ND  
(701) 477-8228

Spirit Lake Nation  
Fort Totten, ND  
(701) 766-4111

Fort Berthold Tribal Office  
Three Affiliated Tribes  
New Town, ND  
(701) 627-8207

Standing Rock Field Office  
Fort Yates, ND  
(701) 854-3775

Williston Field Office  
Trenton Indian Service Area  
(701) 572-9651



Native plants workshop at  
Circle of Nations School



Sweetgrass herbal garden at  
Turtle Mountain Reservation



Construction of medicine wheel  
at Northern Lights  
Community Center in New Town



# South Dakota

## Plant Materials Tribal Conservation Assistance

The South Dakota plant materials committee is comprised of members from seven different watershed areas. The annual meeting is usually held during the second week in January. The staff resource conservationist of the NRCS State office in Huron is the primary plant materials contact person. The office phone number is (605) 352-1200.

**Highlights:** Primary activities with American Indian partners have been trial plantings of sweetgrass and white sage. Lower Brule Sioux Reservation members began planting sweetgrass in 2001 to replace the wild sweetgrass that grew along the Missouri River bottomland before the mainstem dams flooded the area. The first harvest of sweetgrass was in 2003. Braids are given to Tribal elders, Tribal government officials, and members for traditional and religious use. A limited number of braids are sold to tourists. Future plantings include establishment of sweetgrass in natural areas, raised planting beds at the Elderly Center, and irrigated plantings for production and increase. Field and demonstration plantings of various species include leadplant (*Amorpha canescens*), black chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*), Amur chokecherry (*Prunus maackii*), gray dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*), and slough sedge (*Carex atherodes*). Presentations and/or demonstration plantings have been conducted at Sisseton-Wahpeton Tribal College, Rosebud Reservation, and Sinte Gleska University.

*“Sweetgrass plantings from the PMC were established to replace the wild sweetgrass that grew along the Missouri River bottomland and was completely destroyed by the dams. This is the first time sweetgrass has been harvested on the reservation since dam completion.”*

– Joel Bich  
Biologist

Lower Brule Sioux Reservation

### NRCS Tribal Coordinator Offices

State Tribal Liaison  
Huron, SD  
(605) 352-1217

Cheyenne River Tribal Office  
Eagle Butte, SD  
(605) 964-8118

Lower Brule-Crow Creek Sioux Tribal Office  
Lower Brule, SD  
(605) 869-2216

Oglala Sioux Tribal Office  
Pine Ridge, SD  
(605) 685-1239 ext. 3

Rosebud Sioux Tribal Office  
Rosebud, SD  
(605) 747-5132

Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribal Office  
Sisseton, SD  
(605) 698-3911 ext. 466



Sweetgrass planting utilizing extra space from an irrigated cornfield on Lower Brule Sioux Reservation



First harvest of sweetgrass in 40 years at Lower Brule Sioux Reservation



Leadplant at Cheyenne River Indian Reservation