



# NPDC NewsNote

*A periodic note for NRCS State PLANTS Coordinators*  
**10 March 2004**

## Digital Images

More folks are acquiring digital cameras and taking plant pictures. We currently have over 19,000 on PLANTS and 24,000 more are in the pipeline. If you are planning to take images for contributing to PLANTS, we prefer all shots to be taken with a 4 megapixel or higher camera, on a tripod, at your camera's highest resolution, and saved as TIFF files.

If you take JPEG images, remember that this is a compressed image format. It reduces the file size, but also degrades the image quality. The more times you open a JPEG, make changes, and resave it as a JPEG, the more it degrades. A TIFF file can be edited without losing data.

We have a set of guidelines and tips that we've developed in collaboration with our photographic cooperators. Some of the info can be found by clicking on the PLANTS FAQs and at the PLANTS Gallery links. If you would like a copy, just send me an email.

## New Data Downloads Easily Accessible on PLANTS

There are new data sets available in the PLANTS Download area of Web site for the 1) *Grazing and Spatial Analysis Tool (GSAT)* and 2) *Symbols for Unknown Plants*.

- ✓ **GSAT Download:** The module for downloading state GSAT lists is now accessible from the PLANTS Download area. NM (Thanks George) provided us with a GSAT data set to assist in the building of the module, so it is the only one currently on-line. You'll hear more about the GSAT in an upcoming National Bulletin. If you and your Grazing Lands Specialist would like to get ahead of the curve, just send me an email.
  
- ✓ **Symbols for Unknown Plants:** The Symbols for Unknown Plants are of utility to the field involved in NRI, grazing lands survey, and other inventories when a plant can't be identified to species or genus, but you want to record it. This list consists of symbols (beginning with the numeral 2) that have been standardized across agencies (NRCS, USFS, USGS,

BLM, etc.) to represent “unknowns” in plant transects and inventories. This list contains over one hundred “unknowns” ranging from 2FA=annual forb or 2LTR=litter to 2SDBD=shrub, deciduous, broadleaf, dicot. The list of these symbols is maintained by the NPDC and is available in the PLANTS Download area on the PLANTS Home Page <plants.usda.gov>.

### **Boy Scouts of America Fieldbook**

The Boy Scouts of America has just published a new Fieldbook to compliment their *Boy Scout Handbook*. This new publication follows the tradition started with the 1<sup>st</sup>, 1967 edition, and guides Scouts in learning “advanced skills for outdoor travel, adventure, and caring for the land.” It strongly emphasizes minimizing impact on the land and the concepts of Leave No Trace. Development of content, text, and information for several chapters of the Fieldbook covering plants, plant identification, vegetation, and stewardship was led by Norman Melvin (Wetland Sciences Institute) assisted by Scott Peterson and Mark Skinner (National Plant Data Center). These chapters include numbers 28-Observing Nature; 31-Plants; and 34-Being Good Stewards of Our Resources. Additionally, NRCS and PLANTS photographs are used throughout the text.

### **Your Feedback is Needed**

Please send comments regarding PLANTS, NPDC NewsNote, or other plant-related issues to <scott.peterson@usda.gov>.

USDA NRCS [National Plant Data Center](http://plants.usda.gov)

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