

Plant Press

Finding Vegetative
Solutions for
Conservation
Problems



USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service - Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center

Personnel

Richard "Doc" Neill was away for the whole quarter with complications from knee surgery last summer. I want send my sincerest thanks to all the people of the Plant Materials Program that donated their leave time to me. Without your help, I would have been on leave without pay for over four months. **Thank you all.**

While I was away, Garret Thomassie was made acting manager. Morris Houck the Louisiana Plant Materials Specialist who was former manager of the Knox City Plant Material Center advised Garret, and between them the Golden Meadow Plant Material Center thrived.



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Quality Assurance Review (QAR)

In December 2007, the Golden Meadow PMC had the opportunity for a Quality Assurance Review (QAR). Because of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the review had been postponed until this year. Preparation for the QAR took considerable time and effort. Other PMCs scheduled for a QAR can call us about the experience and preparation.

Thanks to Morris' experience as a plant materials center manager and Garret's intimate knowledge of the Golden Meadow Center and its eccentricities the center was able to do well through the QAR. For the review Bob Escheman, National Program Leader, Plant Materials; Joel Douglas, Regional Plant Materials Specialist; Kevin Norton, LA State Conservationist; John Hall, MD State Conservationist; and Steve Carmichael, LA State Resource Conservationist were present. Kevin is our new State Conservationist coming from Oklahoma. The QAR was a good time to introduce him to the world of plant materials and PMCs.

PMC Staff

Richard Neill, Manager
richard.neill@la.usda.gov

Garret Thomassie
Assistant Manager

Mark Felarise
Biological Science Technician

Alexis Luke
Office Automation Assistant

Earline Robichaux
Biological Science Aid

Chera Kee Trosclair
Biological Science Aid

Dawn Bagala
Biological Science Aid

Shaun Harris
Biological Science Aid

Morris Houck
Plant Materials Specialist
Alexandria, LA

The Mission of the NRCS Plant Materials Program:

We develop and transfer plant materials and plant technology for the conservation of natural resources. In working with a broad range of plant species, including grasses, forbs, trees, and shrubs, the program seeks to address priority needs of field offices and land managers in both public and private sectors. Emphasis is focused on using native plants as a sustainable way to solve conservation problems and protect ecosystems.

Release

In the last quarter of FY 2007 Golden Meadow PMC released a germplasm of California bulrush [*Schoenoplectus californicus* (C.A. Mey) Palla] under the name Bayou Lafourche Germplasm. This species has been interesting to work with because while it is considered to be a fresh water species, there are indications that some populations in our collection have the genetic predisposition to tolerate varying salinities. In Louisiana this characteristic will be important because of coastal subsidence and salt water incursion. Louisiana is losing about 25 square miles a year of marsh so having plants that can tolerate increasing salinity while performing as an energy buffer in the marsh will enhance our efforts in soil conservation while more permanent solutions to the problems are being developed.



We have been working with the Louisiana State AgCenter Rice Research Station. Dr. Herry Utomo of the Rice Research Station thinks that he may have identified genetic markers for some of the salt tolerance. If we can verify this work we can work toward further salt tolerance without as many years' outplantings.

We are presently increasing our supply of Bayou Lafourche Germplasm and plan on distributing it's rhizomes to our growers.

Plant Activities

Most of the plants that we produce are vegetatively propagated and we depend on the winter to increase our stock. With the greenhouses now up and running after the hurricanes we are spending much of our time increasing our stock. We should be up to pre-hurricane levels of plant stock and ready to provide our growers with most of their needs. We have also added a new emergency generator capable of powering our greenhouses, office space and head house.



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