



ALDERSON, WEST VIRGINIA PLANT MATERIALS CENTER

Year 2000 Progress Report of Activities

March 2001

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Who We Are

The Alderson Plant Materials Center serves 11 states in the Appalachian Region from Pennsylvania to Georgia and Alabama. The Center is operated by the USDA-NRCS in cooperation with the USDA-Agriculture Research Service, U.S. Forest Service and the Agriculture Experiment Stations of West Virginia University, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and the University of Kentucky. Alderson is located in the heart of Appalachia, and the Center is situated on County Route 3/29, also known as Old Prison Farm Road, approximately 20 miles Southeast of Lewisburg, West Virginia. This center is new with regard to land resource and physical plant, but is the product of the transfer of programs and equipment from Quicksand, Kentucky to Alderson, West Virginia. The transfer of center functions began in 1996 and was completed in 2000.

What We Do

The Plant Materials Center serves Appalachia by evaluating plants for their ability to solve specific conservation problems related to climate, the rugged topography, soil limitations, various land uses, fish and wildlife needs and desires of the landowners. The center provides a place for conducting systematic observations and evaluations of plants needed to protect our natural resources. New techniques are developed



Tall Oatgrass with Plant Materials Center
Headquarters Buildings in Background

for the propagation, establishment, management and use for new or improved species of grasses, legumes, shrubs and trees.

The Center's program will emphasize improving forage production on hillside pastures, address problems associated with concentrated livestock, reclamation of mined lands, streambank stabilization, agro-forestry, wildlife habitat improvement, and utilization of economic and culturally valuable plants. The center assembles plants from the entire service area with similar soils and climate, evaluates the plants, develops management techniques, and provides seed and plants for planting to test performance throughout the area. Most of the plant materials produced at the center are used in West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia, and North Carolina.

Alderson currently maintains parent seed or woody stock for seven commercially available plants developed at the former Quicksand, Kentucky location. These plants are:

- 'Gobbler' Sawtooth Oak
- 'Golden' Chinquapin
- 'Quickstand' Bermudagrass
- 'Appalow' Sericea Lespedeza
- 'Bankers' Dwarf Willow
- 'Steiner' Black Locust
- 'Rhizo' Kura Clover



'Golden' Chinquapin seedling



'Rhizo' Kura Clover in flower

Plant Materials Center Dedicated In 2000

On May 30, 2000 the Alderson Plant materials Center was formally dedicated to service the plant resource needs of the Appalachian Region. This dedication ceremony marked the culmination of roughly ten years of planning, construction, and transfer of equipment and plant materials from Quicksand, Kentucky to Alderson, West Virginia. West Virginia Senator Robert C. Byrd was the keynote speaker for the event. During his address, Byrd stated "This brand new facility has been designed and equipped to develop hardy plants for the hardy people of West Virginia and the rest of the Appalachian Region that it serves. As the Alderson Plant Materials Center matures, along with it will grow farm economies in West Virginia, healthier animals, and improved mine

reclamation practices.

Farmers and landowners will look to the Alderson Center for the best materials –those that will flourish in our soil, help to clean our water, provide habitat for animals and bring beauty to our world." Pearlie Reed, Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, thanked Byrd for his work on behalf of soil and water conservation. "You are a friend and a champion." He said a huge responsibility is resting at Alderson to develop the best plants for Appalachia.



The Honorable Robert C. Byrd

Culturally Significant Plants for the Eastern Cherokee

White oak and giant cane are two plants with cultural significance for the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation. Cherokee basket weavers use both. The most desirable white oak for basket weaving will have a 6 inch maximum diameter and a trunk length of at least eight feet that is branch free. Giant cane stems that are 2 inches in diameter are preferred for baskets. These plant types are in extremely short supply, and the Cherokee have asked for plant materials assistance to increase the supply of these plant types. Alderson Plant Materials Center will be assisting with development of propagation and cultural methods to increase the supply of white oak and giant cane for the Cherokee crafters.

Variation in White Clover from Central Appalachia

In 1999, the Alderson Plant Materials Center assisted Dr. Paul Voigt, USDA-ARS Appalachian Farming Systems Research Center, with collection of vegetative white clover. Sixty-six collections were made in eastern Kentucky, eastern Ohio, western Virginia, and West Virginia. Thirty plants from each collection were planted in replicated plots, ten plants per plot, at Alderson. 'Regal' and 'Sacramento' were included for comparison. Plants were evaluated in 2000 for leaf size, canopy height, plant spread, pest damage, stolon density, and flowering. Variation within and among the collections was extensive.

Visit the Plant Materials Program web site: <http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>

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