

# Success Stories

## Plant Materials Revegetates Wildfire Areas



**S**ometimes the worst damage happens after the wildfires are extinguished. Plants developed by the Plant Materials Program, like Tusas Germplasm bottlebrush squirreltail and Garnet Germplasm mountain brome, are quick to establish and can help prevent the soil erosion and water quality degradation that often happens after fires.



Tusas Germplasm bottlebrush squirreltail, released by the NRCS Plant Materials Center in Los Lunas, New Mexico, is one of the most fire-resistant bunchgrasses available in the West and can survive sequential burns. In addition, it produces ample seed

despite sparse initial populations, making it well suited for seeding after wildfire or prescribed burns.

Garnet Germplasm mountain brome, released by the Upper Colorado Environmental Plant Center near Meeker, Colorado, establishes quickly from seedings on burned sites and is relatively long-lived. The grass also can provide immediate forage for wildlife and livestock after fires.

Besides selecting improved plants, the Plant Materials Program provides landowners the needed one-on-one technical assistance to ensure successful plantings after wildfire. The program also transfers technology through publications, such as “Wildfire Risk Reduction and Recovery Tips for Homeowners,” by the NRCS Plant Materials Center in Tucson, Arizona, and through wildfire features on its Web site, <http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>.

## Plant Materials Technology Enhances CRP

**N**ow NRCS can offer landowners more tools for enhancing their existing Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres to improve plant diversity and wildlife habitat.

Several years ago, with the 16<sup>th</sup> CRP signup, NRCS offered producers an opportunity to improve their chances of re-

enrollment if they agreed to include additional plant species. However, very little information was available at the time on the various methods of interseeding existing stands.

The NRCS Plant Materials Center in Manhattan, Kansas, researched and developed alternative methods for seeding directly into CRP. The center set up several test plots on existing CRP stands and evaluated the effectiveness of different seed bed preparation methods, such as mowing, light disking, burning, and chemical use. They also looked at the establishment of different enhancement plants and the effectiveness of different seeding rates and planting times.



Summarizing their results, they provided guidelines to NRCS field offices and incorporated recommendations into the Field Office Technical Guide. Since much of the information is applicable to CRP stands across the nation, it will provide guidance for additional CRP signups as a result of the 2002 Farm Bill.

## Program Fills WRP Demand for Natives

**W**hen it comes to native wetland plants, it's often the old story of demand exceeding supply. The NRCS Plant Materials Center near Brooksville, Florida, is hard at work to remedy the situation.



With the success of the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) in the state, the need for wetland plants is higher than ever, yet there are very few species available commercially. Besides testing a whole host of plants for possible future use, the center released Citrus Germplasm maidencane to help fill the need.

Citrus Germplasm maidencane boasts a strongly rhizomatous root system that helps stabilize streambanks and the edges of freshwater marshes. It also works as a filter strip around water bodies.

The Florida program isn't the only one trying to keep up with the demand for native wetland plants. Many of the 26 Plant Materials Centers nationwide are testing and improving wetland plants for conservation use.

## Stream Team Promotes Bioengineering Technology

**T**hanks to a partnership between the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) and an interagency Stream Team Program, there are more healthy streambanks and shorelines in Arkansas.

Over the past decade, the team, consisting of members from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and the NRCS Plant Materials Program, committed a significant amount of funding to riparian restoration projects, including six biologists to coordinate volunteers and implement the program. They developed a specification guide outlining erosion control methods and planting recommendations, and trained NRCS field conservationists on the latest bioengineering techniques.

## Tribe Partnership Helps Cultural Plants

**T**wo important cultural resource plants for Pacific Northwest tribes soon may be staging a comeback.

The native populations of tule, or hardstem bulrush, and camas are decreasing in the region and information on how to propagate and establish the plants is lacking. The NRCS Plant

Materials Center near Corvallis, Oregon, is working with the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon to study tule propagation, and Plant Materials Center staff is investigating camas establishment techniques for wetland restoration.

Native American tribes use tule for mat making, clothing, funeral and name-giving ceremonies, and lodge or floor coverings. Camas bulbs are an important food staple traditionally dried, baked, and traded.



The partners conducted the tule experiments on the Warm Springs Reservation and they are now providing data on the best reproductive techniques and planting methods. In addition, Plant Materials Center staff evaluated camas seed germination, bulb increase, and site preparation methods both at the center and on an actual restoration site owned by the City of Corvallis.

For more information, visit <http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov> and <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>

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