



This semi-annual newsletter is published by the USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center, 14119 Broad Street, Brooksville, FL 34601-4525, Tel: 352-796-9600, FAX: 352-799-7305. E-mail: clarence.maura@fl.usda.gov

Materials Available for Demo Plantings

Do you know of an area that needs to be landscaped (around an office, in a park, etc.)? Want to try a native, low-maintenance plant? The PMC has 'Martin' and 'St. Lucie' eastern gamagrass planting stock available for use in xeriscape and buffer demonstration plantings. These two Florida gamagrasses have an attractive blue-green color that serves as a wonderful backdrop for native wildflowers. Gamagrass prefers moist sites, and can grow 4 to 5 feet tall with adequate moisture and nitrogen. Plants will also do well on drier sites if properly mulched, though they will be much smaller in size.

Interested in wildlife food plots? Deer and turkey love 'Chapingo' Mexican teosinte. A relative of corn, teosinte needs similar moisture and nutrient conditions to germinate, mature and produce seed. But be forewarned, unless very small plots are fenced, deer will keep teosinte grazed off to the ground, never allowing it to go to seed. Limited amounts of teosinte seed are available for small demonstration food plots.

For those wanting to purchase seed for large food plots, they can add a new name to their list of teosinte growers. The Jack Melton Family, near Brooksville, FL, is now growing teosinte for commercial sale, (352) 583-3052.



TOPPS Students Help PMC Tackle Erosion at Pine Island Beach

Pine Island, a popular recreational park in Hernando Co., is a rare stretch of white sandy beach along Florida's "Nature Coast". But even in this small bit of paradise, county park managers were having problems with erosion. Sand in borders and medians kept blowing into the parking lot, so they contacted the PM staff for help. On March 20, 18 eager Springstead High School students and 3 staff members (see pictures) came out to the park to help PMC staff plant 'Flora Sun' beach sunflowers and 'Sharp' marshhay cordgrass. Thanks to their hard work, the plants were in the ground before noon, leaving time for their principle to provide them with a hot dog roast and a dip in the Gulf.

The students are part of TOPPS (Technology Oriented Performance Program). A program in Hernando Co. designed to help at risk students earn a high school diploma. It includes a strong vocational emphasis, and all students are members of the Future Farmers of America. The PMC staff has been enjoying helping this great group of students learn, hands-on, about native plant materials and how they benefit our environment.

Everything is Coming Up...Yellow!

If you drop by to visit the PMC this summer, expect to see acres of yellow. The PMC is working with Dr. Jeff Norcini of the University of Florida, IFAS, to grow wildflowers for roadside beautification. Dr. Norcini, through a grant with the Department of Transportation, is developing two Florida wildflowers to plant along roadways: yellowtop (*Flavaria linearis*) and blackeyed susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*). He has asked the PMC to help increase the seed stocks of three ecotypes of the yellowtop and one ecotype of blackeyed susan for commercial growers.

Because of limited amounts of seed, plants are being started in containers in the greenhouse and then transplanted to the field. Our faithful volunteer, Mary Neron, has been a tremendous help in this project. She has spent many hours transplanting wildflower seedlings from flats to larger containers. The first transplants were set out in the field in January. Thus far, they have survived a marauding hog, nibbles from the resident herd of deer, and two nights of freezing weather.

Nothing is known about the growth habits or characteristics of yellowtop in field production settings. Information gleaned by the PMC in this project will be used to develop production protocols for future growers.

Through the Eyes of a Technician

THE PLANT MATERIALS CENTER

*We're the U.S.D.A. -
N.R.C.S.*

*Our plant people
are some of the best.*

*Our part is known
as the P.M.C.
We have plant varieties
you'd have to see to believe.*

*We grow plants for animals
and to keep mother nature
from turning a washout
into a crater.*

*If you have erosion
and don't know what to do,
we're the "Plant Materials Center".
We are here to help you!*

*We grow plants for forage
and restoration.
All in all,
it's a real good vocation.*

*We're farming and science
all rolled into one.
Sure it's hard work,
but it can also be fun.*

*Out in the field
communing with nature,
but at the end of the day,
it still goes on paper.*

*We hoe and weed
and then we till.
When we get out the Roundup,
it's - "Shoot to kill"!*

*We harvest, plant and sweat,
and sometimes we fuss.
But watching them grow, bloom and seed
will give you a rush.*

*From Pensacola to Palm Beach
and back to Fort Myers.
There's plants growing there
that used to be ours.*

*We have information
we don't sell for pay.
Come by and see us,
we give it away.*

*Three cheers for Plant Materials
and I've done my good deed.
Hip Hip Hoo...
Aw man - there's another weed!*

Ed Black,
FLPMC Biological Technician



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