



# Plant Chat

A Quarterly Publication from the Bismarck Plant Materials Center  
to the NRCS Field Offices in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota

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## Tree Fabric - To Every Silver Lining There is a Cloud

Ten years ago, we worried that the weed control fabric being applied would soon break down and be blowing across the countryside. Thousands of miles of fabric later, we find that worry was unfounded. However, fabric can girdle trees and restrict suckering ability of some shrub spe-



*Ponderosa pine girdled by  
weed control fabric*

cies. In some cases, fabric has begun to deform the stems on trees leaving them prone to windthrow or death. Impaired shrub suckering reduces the cover value of wildlife plantings. Reduced spread between rows due to fabric has been observed for lilac, juneberry, and dogwood. Regular inspections will indicate when fabric openings should be enlarged.

*Craig Stange, Forester, State Office*

## Alert! Seed Tag Changes

Have you purchased native warm-season grass seed recently? If so, you may have noticed low germination and high dormancy percentages on the tags of big bluestem, little bluestem, and Indiangrass. This is NOT necessarily an indication of poor quality seed. It is the result of a change in laboratory testing procedures for these species. Dormant seed is alive, but has a physical or physiological condi-

tion that prevents it from germinating. There are different types of dormancy. Some dormancy lasts for extensive time, while other dormancy has a short duration. Previously, seed was treated (prechilled at 5°C for 14 days, KNO<sub>3</sub>) to break down the short duration dormancy before doing germination counts in the laboratory. New testing procedures do not include dormancy breaking treatment of the seed before germination counts. Dormancy types are not separated. The dormancy reported is generally higher, and the germination is lower than in the past. Most of the dormancy now reported is short term, and most of the seed will germinate the year of planting just as it has in the past.

When preparing to plant your seed, calculate the total viability and pure live seed (PLS) the same as you have previously done. Add the percent dormancy and percent germination together to find the total viability of the seed. Multiply the percent purity and percent total viability to find the percent PLS of the lot.

Proposals have been submitted for additional species to be tested using the new procedures in the next few years. We will try to keep you informed of these changes so you can better understand the seed tags.

*Nancy Jensen, Agronomist, Plant Materials Center*

## Spring Shipping Season

Orders are being processed to ship via UPS to field offices for spring planting. Requests were approved at each state plant materials committee meeting for mammoth wildrye and dune wildrye (seed, April 21); gray dogwood (bare-root, April 28); slough sedge (bare-rhizome, April 28); and sweetgrass (rooted w/soil, May 27). Plant

material type and approximate shipping date are in parentheses. Seed packets are usually sent when requested.

*Dwight Tober, Plant Materials Specialist*

## Red River Prairie Cordgrass Rhizomes Available

Are you planning riparian or wetland projects in 2003? Prairie cordgrass provides excellent stabilization when revegetating adjacent to rivers, lakes, wetlands, and sites with increased water availability. Rhizomes of Red River prairie cordgrass will be available for spring and fall planting. Lincoln Oakes Nursery will be selling rhizomes dug from PMC foundation



*Bareroot  
prairie  
cordgrass  
rhizome*

fields of Red River prairie cordgrass. The Bismarck PMC has successfully planted prairie cordgrass rhizomes both by hand and with a tree planter. A key factor is to keep the planting several feet above the permanent waterline. The rhizome material should be handled similar to bareroot tree stock. It can be placed in a tree cooler to keep it moist and cool prior to planting. If riparian or wetland projects are scheduled in your area, consider planting rhizomes on the site. We hope that this initial commercial production will be a success and Red River prairie cordgrass rhizomes will be available commercially in the future. To order the Red River prairie cordgrass rhizomes for 2003, contact Greg Morgenson at Lincoln Oakes Nursery (701-223-8575).

*Wayne Duckwitz, Manager, Plant Materials Center*

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