



Plant Chat

A Quarterly Publication from the Plant Materials Program to the NRCS Field Offices in ND, SD, and MN

Winter 2002

Volume 2, Issue 1

<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>

Native Seed Available for Containerized Production

Small packets of certified seed of native grasses are available for commercial nursery/greenhouse growers from the Bismarck Plant Materials Center (PMC) at no cost. This seed can be used to produce containerized



'Mandan' Canada wildrye

plants for sale to homeowners interested in prairie landscaping. This is an effort to familiarize commercial growers and greenhouses with adapted varieties and species of native grass, and to make them more readily available to the average homeowner. Native grasses for landscaping are becoming more popular with the general public for both their natural beauty and reduced maintenance/lower water use. Most commercial greenhouses get started growing perennials in January or February so now is a good time



'Bad River' blue grama

to contact them. If you have a nursery in your service area that would be interested in growing native grasses, let us know so we can distribute the seed to them. A good reference is the PMC color brochure **"Native Grasses for Prairie Landscaping – In the Northern Great Plains"**. Contact the PMC if you would like a copy. Grasses are hot right now in the horticultural trade and sales of native grasses in six-packs, flats, or gallon pots have been



'Badlands' little bluestem

increasing for many commercial growers. Varieties that have been selling well include Bad River blue grama, Badlands little bluestem, Pierre sideoats grama, Bison big bluestem, Dacotah switchgrass, Mandan Canada wildrye, and Red River prairie cordgrass. For more information, contact Dwight Tober at (701)530-2075 or the PMC.

Dwight Tober, Plant Materials Specialist

Maximilian Sunflower

Maximilian sunflower is named for a German naturalist who traveled in North Dakota in 1833-1834, overwintering at Fort Clark. Maximilian sunflower is a perennial, tall, native



Maximilian sunflower in native seeding

warm-season forb that occurs on the Great Plains from Saskatchewan, south to Missouri and Texas. In 2000, the PMC released a selection of this species for use in the Northern Plains. The selection originated from a silty range site in the Medicine Creek watershed of Hughes County in central South Dakota.

Maximilian sunflower prefers moist sites on heavier soils, and is often found in association with big bluestem. This plant is a good choice for inclusion in seeding mixtures for livestock and wildlife plantings. It is quite palatable to livestock, deer are fond of grazing on it, and a variety of songbirds feed on the ripe seed. The tendency to form thickets or large colonies creates ideal cover habitat. Maximilian sunflower also has potential as a filter strip species because of the ability to uptake and use excess water and nutrients. The recommended seeding rate in a mixture is 1/10 of a pound per acre.

The PMC is looking for producers interested in commercially growing Medicine Creek Germplasm Maximilian sunflower. If you know of anyone who may be interested, contact Dwight Tober, Plant Materials Specialist or the PMC for more information.

Mike Knudson, Forester



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