Visitors are always welcome at the Manhattan PMC. The staff is eager to share its enthusiasm for plants and conservation. Public awareness and support are important to the success of the program.

Tours are available Monday through Friday
7:00 AM to 4:00 PM
3800 South 20th Street
Manhattan, Kansas 66502-9535

Please call before visiting the Center to ensure that someone will be available to show you around and answer any questions you may have.
Phone: 785-539-8761
Fax: 785-539-2034

Directions

From Manhattan: From Ft. Riley Blvd. or Tuttle Creek Blvd. (east side of Manhattan by Manhattan Town Center Mall) cross the Kansas River Bridge. Immediately after crossing the bridge, turn right on Riley Co. 901-McDowell Creek Road, travel 6.0 miles, turn right on Riley Co. 424. Follow Riley Co. 424, 3 miles north and 1 mile west to the PMC.

From I-70: Travelers on I-70 should exit 307-McDowell Creek Road Interchange. Eastbound travelers should turn left, westbound travelers should turn right on Riley Co. 901-McDowell Creek Road, travel 3.6 miles to west 40th Avenue, turn left and travel 3 miles north to PMC.
The Manhattan Plant Materials Center (PMC) is one of a national network of plant centers dedicated to providing vegetative solutions to conservation problems. The center is owned and operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

This PMC serves a diverse region of the heartland including Kansas, Nebraska, northern Oklahoma, and eastern Colorado. This area of the country was originally native grasslands. Annual amounts of precipitation in this region can vary greatly. Temperatures fluctuate widely and are often accompanied by high winds. Soil types also vary widely from the clays of northeastern Oklahoma to the coarse sandy soils found in the Nebraska Sandhills. The extremes of climate and soil offer a challenging and varied environment in which conservation plants must survive and flourish to be effective.

Today, this region’s land use is largely devoted to agriculture. The production of food and fiber is the leading industry in the heartland. Land users can enjoy many activities that involve the natural resources of the area; i.e., fishing, hunting, and viewing wildlife. When natural resources are used in a responsible manner, the risk of damage is reduced, and the resource will be conserved for future use and enjoyment. However, some activities can be detrimental to resources and can create erosion or other environmental disturbances.

When this occurs, plants can often be used to restore and protect the environment. The Plant Materials Program’s primary focus is to pursue elusive, hardy, desirable plants that have the ability to survive and prosper under adverse conditions.

Released plant materials can be used to achieve the following:

- Conservation of highly erosive soils
- Range and pasture improvement
- Field and farmstead buffers
- Wildlife and wetland habitat improvement
- Water and air quality improvement
- Biodiversity improvement
- Invasive species reduction

Program Objectives

The purpose of the Plant Materials Program is:

- to assemble, select, improve, test, and release plant varieties or germplasm for conservation uses,
- to promote the use of improved plant materials to meet the priorities and objectives of the NRCS conservation strategic plan,
- to develop management and cultural techniques necessary for the establishment and acceptance of promising plant materials, and
- to produce limited quantities of foundation quality seed or seedlings to stimulate commercial production.

Program Products

The PMC and Plant Materials Specialist (PMS) cooperate with a variety of public and private conservation partners to select and produce improved plants for conservation. The program also develops state-of-the-art technology necessary for successful conservation plantings that reduce soil erosion and improve water and air quality. The reward for the producer is improved crop production, lower input costs, and positive environmental impact to natural resources.

The PMC and PMS also coordinate field activities that provide answers for USDA Service Center staffs on questions such as saline affected soils, techniques for reducing blow-outs, invasive species control, and other complex resource concerns. Questions posed by field offices are often insightful since their customers are the producers that face conservation challenges on a daily basis.

The Plant Materials Program has made a significant contribution to the conservation of the natural resources of the United States. The program has provided land-based solutions to erosion problems that have plagued this country since the invention of the moldboard plow. With a healthy dose of common sense and applied research, the Plant Materials Program staff has developed and distributed plants and technology that provides solutions to conservation problems.