

Marsh Notes

Finding Vegetative
Solutions for
Conservation
Problems



USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service - Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center

New Employee Joins *Team PMC*

Originally from North Carolina, Brandon Merz has spent the past few years traveling around the country going to school and working seasonal jobs. In May 2013, he graduated with a B.S. degree in Forestry with a concentration in Forest Health and Ecological Restoration from Northern Arizona University. His current position at the Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center is working as a Biological Science Technician. He previously held a seasonal Forestry Aid position at the Monongahela National Forest in the mountains of West Virginia.



Brandon said moving to Galliano was a great decision because of the abundance of opportunities for him to enjoy his favorite hobby, fishing. Another of his favorite activities is to go hiking, anywhere like the desert, forest, or mountains because he loves to be out in the wilderness. While there are not many trails “down here on the bayou,” walking along the shoreline on the beaches of Grand Isle, LA has been just as exciting. There are several attractions he plans to visit, such as Kisatchie National Forest, so he can go hiking and camping in a landscape that is new to him. History has always been an interest of his, so he wants to visit the Indian Mounds in northeast Louisiana. He would also like to visit New Orleans, “The Big Easy” and experience Mardi Gras while living in Cajun Country.

Brandon’s future plans consist of doing the best he can at his current position and seeing where opportunities take him. He enjoys being a federal employee and is working toward finding a permanent fulltime position. One of Brandon’s first duties was to assist the staff in the annual harvest of Pelican germplasm black mangrove seed. Obviously, being a novice to the sport, Brandon stepped in and outcompeted 15 year veteran Garret Thomassie and 3 year veteran Curt Riche’ by harvesting the most seed. Brandon looks forward working at the Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center and the staff is delighted to have Brandon onboard.

Winter Issue 2014

Green Facts

Five tons of topsoil spread over an acre is only as thick as a dime.

http://www.alabamaaitc.org/uploadedFiles/File/Cool_Soil_Facts.pdf

PMC Staff

Garret Thomassie,
PMC Manager
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Curt J. Riche’
Soil Conservationist

Brandon Merz
Biological Science Technician

Alexis Luke
Program Assistant

Morris Houck
Plant Materials Specialist
Alexandria, LA

PMC VEG QUIZ

Can you identify this native species?



Answer in next publication

Answer to Fall 2013 PMC Veg Quiz:
Lance-leaf Coreopsis
Coreopsis lanceolata L.

The Mission of the NRCS Plant Materials Program:

We develop and transfer plant materials and plant technology for the conservation of natural resources. In working with a broad range of plant species, including grasses, forbs, trees, and shrubs, the program seeks to address priority needs of field offices and land managers in both public and private sectors. Emphasis is focused on using native plants as a sustainable way to solve conservation problems and protect ecosystems.

USDA  NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

If you would like more information call us at (985) 475-5280 or visit our web site at <http://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/lapmc>

Switchgrass Plots Attract Doves

According to the USDA NRCS Plant Fact Sheet, Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum* L.) has numerous uses for grazing of livestock, erosion control, wildlife benefits and biofuel sources. Numerous accessions of



switchgrass collected and grown in a crossing block at the Center certainly verifies the wildlife benefits of switchgrass. It is not uncommon to approach the plot at any time of the day and flush up several hundred mourning doves. The fine seed produced provides food for birds for many months out of the year.

Increase of Texas Coneflower

As part of the Louisiana Native Plant Initiative Program, the PMC grew out approximately 300 Texas Coneflower (*Rudbeckia texana*) plants that were transported to Nicholls State University's Farm and planted adjacent to the existing seed increase block. These plantings with the addition of other native species will help expand the overall population in order to increase future seed production to be made available to commercial producers.



Ecological Sciences Meeting

The Golden Meadow PMC hosted this year's Louisiana NRCS Ecological Sciences meeting in the fall. It was a way for the staff to collaboratively share ideas and identify FY 2014 disciplines. Topics of discussion include administration, economics, grazing, wildlife, forestry, agronomy and conservation planning. Each member of the group was asked to pick 3 topics and to suggest on how to improve each respective discipline in order to better assist state wide NRCS field offices.

3rd Annual St. Mary Parish Farmer and Rancher Banquet

The 3rd annual Farmer and Rancher Appreciation Banquet was held at the Cypress Bayou Casino in Charenton, La. This event hosted over 120 farmers, ranchers, conservationists, biologists and representatives from United States Department of Agriculture, Louisiana Department of Ag and Forestry, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and two prominent sugar mills in St. Mary Parish.



Left to Right: Patra Ghergich, Dr. Mike Strain, Kim Allain, Curt Riche', Alexis Luke, Yvonne Welther, Juanita Clements, Renee Simon

Plant Materials Specialist Corner

The Party is Over – Morris has left the Building!!!!

On June 5, 1983, Morris Houck started his career as a Soil Conservationist, working at the Soil Conservation Service Field Office in the small west Texas town of Floydada. Since that time Morris has had the privilege to spend the last 26 years of his career in the Plant Materials Program. He started out as the assistant manager of the Los Lunas Plant Materials Center in New Mexico before managing the Knox City Plant Materials Center in Texas for 16 years. In his last 7 years he served in Louisiana as the Plant Materials Specialist. During his career, Morris has gotten to know and work with many people that he can call his friends. The Plant Materials Program has done a lot of great things over the past 30 years and he is honored to have been part of it.



The Golden Meadow Plant Materials staff would like to congratulate Morris on his retirement and thank him for all the support he has provided the Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center.

We're on the Web!

www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov

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