



# Rose Lake Plant Materials Center

## *Spring 2012 Newsletter*

### **Dave Burgdorf, Plant Material Specialist Retiring**

After 38 years of service, Dave Burgdorf, Plant Materials Specialist, is retiring on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. He started his career as a summer intern mowing Bin Sites with ASCS and working with the Conservation Technician in the local SCS office. After that summer Dave worked as a manager for a Farm Service warehouse. He then became a SCS Conservation Technician working in one county and then two in Illinois. After a few years Dave became a soil Conservationist and while working in this position was selected for an Upward Mobility Position. After Dave completed his BS in Agronomy with a concentration in Conservation, he was placed as a Soil Conservationist Trainee. Dave then became a



District Conservationist and later an Area Agronomist serving 14 counties in Illinois. He then became an Area Resource Conservationist working in 23 counties. He also served as Acting Area Conservationist for a while.

In the fall of 1989, Dave and his family moved to Michigan when he accepted the position of the Plant Materials Specialist. He has served in this position for the last 23 years, providing assistance to the primary states of MI, IN, OH and WI, working through the State Plant Materials Committees. He has served on the National Plant Materials Technical Advisory Committee and as a Soil Bioengineering instructor for NEDC where he was a cadre member. He traveled several times to Europe, Mexico, and Puerto Rico and throughout the United States.

Dave and his wife Debbie own Burgdorf Winery in Haslett, MI, which will keep him busy in his retirement.

## **Rose Lake PMC partners with Field Office to provide protection to blueberries from road salt.**

Blueberry growers in western Michigan have observed that bushes planted near public roads may have reduced berry production compared to bushes planted further back from the road. The main cause is believed to be damage from road salt used to melt snow and ice during the winter. Road salt dissolves into solution and becomes airborne with passing traffic. The salt spray drifts into the blueberry field affecting the bushes near the road.

Researchers at Michigan State University have studied the effect of salt concentration on blueberry production and have shown that low concentrations will cause similar symptoms to what is seen in production fields. The bushes have healthy leaves but there is minimal flowering and no berry production.

District Conservationist Heather Bartholomew has been working with a blueberry grower in Ottawa County, MI to address this concern. Heather requested assistance from Plant Materials Specialist Dave Burgdorf to select tree species and a planting scheme that would withstand the salt spray and protect the blueberry field. Observations of tamarack in Michigan indicate that they survive well near salted highways and their branching structure will potentially provide windbreak characteristics, especially when the leaves are off of the trees in the winter. The Rose Lake Plant Materials Center, in partnership with the Grand Haven, MI NRCS Field Office and NRCS State Forester Andy Hendriksen, established a windbreak planting using tamarack to help protect blueberries from salt spray.

The land owner did all that site preparation work, clearing out existing vegetation and tilling the area. Heather Bartholomew recruited a group of volunteers to lay out and plant the windbreak. Andy Hendriksen provided training to the staff on planting bare root seedlings. The group planted about 110 seedlings in less than an hour. The Plant Materials Specialist, State Plant Materials Committee and the Plant Materials Center will work with the NRCS Field Office to evaluate the planting and the effects of the windbreak on blueberry production over the next 5 – 10 years.



**NRCS State Forester Andy Hendriksen providing training on bare root planting.**



**District Conservationist Heather Bartholomew and daughter Trinity planting tamarack**



**Windbreak Planting Crew**

## **PMC evaluates cover crops for establishment of hardwood trees.**

Observations of tree establishment plantings in Michigan have noted varying degrees of erosion in newly planted woodlands. The Rose Lake PMC, in coordination with NRCS State Forester Andy Henriksen, established an experiment to evaluate perennial grasses as cover crops to aid in the establishment of hardwood tree species. Two grass species, Canada wildrye and Virginia wildrye, were planted in September 2011. A non-cover crop treatment was also included in the experiment. In May 2012 bare root stock of northern red oak or hickory were planted in those cover crop treatments and tree shelters were placed around each tree. A herbicide treatment was applied around half of the trees in each cover crop area to determine the effects of weed control in the cover crops and non-cover plots.

Tree height was measured the day of planting. Survival, tree height, and vegetative cover estimates will be taken each year for the next 5 – 10 years.



**Biological Science Technician Sergio Perez installing tree shelter and labeling plot**



**Trees planted in wildrye cover plot**



**State forester Andy Henriksen and PMC Agronomist John Durling planting trees**

**Rose Lake Plant Materials Center  
7472 Stoll Rd.  
East Lansing, MI 48823  
Phone: 517-641-6300  
Fax: 517-641-4421**

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