



# Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center

**2011 Annual Technical Report**

**May, 2012**



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
[Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center](#)

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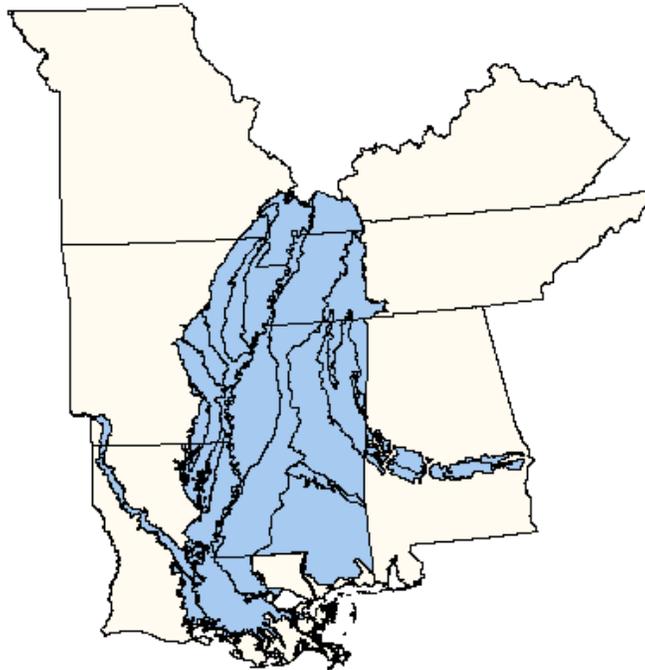
**MSPMC Staff:**

Tommy Moss – Agronomist  
Jon Allison – Gardener

**Introduction:**

The Jamie L Whitten Plant Materials Center (MSPMC), located near Coffeeville, Mississippi, is operated by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Our mission is to select, test and transfer state-of-the-art plant materials and technology to meet the resource needs of a myriad and diverse customer base within our service area. Our program has developed an excellent internal system for identifying future plant materials needs, which is coupled with a seamless system of product development and program delivery. By working with a broad range of plant species, including grasses, forbs, and shrubs, the MSPMC seeks to address priority needs of its customers in NRCS field offices and land managers in both the public and private sector.

The MSPMC works closely with its customers to develop solutions for a broad range of conservation concerns and issues. Cropland erosion control, pastureland improvement, critical area erosion control, including urban conservation concerns, water quality improvement, and wildlife habitat enhancement are the major conservation issues in our service area, which includes the state of Mississippi (excluding the coastal counties), the delta regions of Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Missouri, Kentucky, and the Blackland Prairie of Alabama.



**Activities:**

In order to develop improved resource technology, the MSPMC carries out numerous research studies, both on the center and at other locations within our service area. We often work cooperatively with other agencies and organizations in carrying out this research. Cooperators include the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES), Mississippi State University, Alcorn State University, Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts, Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission, USDA Forest Service, and USDA Agricultural Research Service, and as well as other federal and state agencies and entities within NRCS.

The purpose of this publication is to provide information on studies actively being pursued at the MSPMC during 2009. Any results should be regarded as preliminary and should not be utilized until further testing is completed. An in-depth research report or summary is written after the completion of each study and is published annually in a MSPMC Technical Reports publication. Past reports and summaries are available from the MSPMC or are available on the [MSPMC web site](#).

**MSPMC Site Information:**

The MSPMC occupies more than 360 acres of land (200 acres in open fields) within the Holly Springs National Forest. The growing areas consist of both bottomland and upland fields, with most being of irregular size and shape, defined by streams, drainages, roads, and other topographic features. Bottomland fields are composed primarily of Oaklimer silt loam soils, which are acidic and often wet. With proper drainage and management, these soils can become very productive. Soils on upland sites are predominantly Loring and Grenada silt loams with fragipans. These soils are also acidic and moderately to highly productive. The latest soil testing reports can be found in the 2006 Annual Technical Report.

2011 Rainfall Data at the Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center,  
Coffeeville, MS: (Source: [MesoWest, University of Utah](#))

	<u>Rainfall (inches)</u>	
	2011	Historical average
January	1.74	5.44
February	3.21	4.83
March	5.9	6.40
April	6.6	5.81
May	3.12	5.88
June	2.37	4.71
July	2.44	4.46
August	4.88	3.16
September	6.31	3.70
October	2.52	3.40
November	5.83	5.54
<u>December</u>	<u>5.55</u>	<u>6.06</u>
Total for year	50.47	59.39

### **2011 Publications**

1. Annual Technical Report
2. Annual Report of Activities
3. Winter 2012 newsletter
4. Spring 2012 newsletter
5. Summer 2012 newsletter
6. Newspaper article
7. Updated release brochure – ‘Highlander’ eastern gamagrass
8. Updated release brochure – ‘Halifax’ maidencane

### **Special Projects**

1. USFS Seed Collection: MSPMC to collect native seeds for re-seeding 100 acres.
2. US Park Service – Natchez Trace Multi-use Trail: MSPMC to provide approximately 2900 plants to re-vegetate areas along a new multi-use trail.

# Active Studies

## **Effects of Cover Crops on Sweet Potato [*Ipomoea batatas* (L.) Lam.] Yield, Grade and Soil –Borne Insect Injury, and Field Soil Loss and Soil Quality**

Study Number: MSPMC-T-0701-CR  
Study Leader: MSPMC  
Duration: 2006-2009 (3 growing seasons)  
Cooperators: Robert Wimbish (Agronomist, NRCS), Dr. Bill Burdine (MSU),  
Dr. Seth Dabney (ARS-NSL), Earp Farms

### **Introduction:**

Sweet potato [*Ipomoea batatas* (L.) Lam.] is a crop which still utilizes conventional tillage in its production in Mississippi. The primary issue in the use of reduced tillage or cover crops has been the problem with winter weeds or cover crops harboring insects that pose a threat to the sweet potato crop. However, with the Conservation Security Program (CSP) being initiated, there is a need to reexamine production methods that will bring the Soil Conditioning Index (SCI) for sweet potato production to a positive value. Critical to a positive SCI are reduced tillage systems, crop rotations, and the use of cover crops.

Cover crops will be evaluated as part of a conservation tillage management system in the production of sweet potato. Based on previous work the selected treatments are show in Figure 1, the RCB plot design for the study. Plots will be 4 rows wide by 35 feet long with 10' alleys between the replications and at the ends of the block.

Treatments 2-8 will receive following tillage operations: fall disc, fertilize, disc, bed, roll/drag beds, seed cover crops. Plots will receive burndown herbicide (glyphosate) application late March/early April.

Evaluations will include %cover, dry matter production, sweet potato yield (grade).

### **2006 Activities:**

The cover crops were planted on October 6, 2006, by hand broadcast spreader. Cover crops seeded were: balansa clover, hairy vetch, crimson clover, rye, rye/balansa, wheat, 'Mercer' rye. Volunteer vegetation was to be evaluated in the minimum till control plot.

Cover crop establishment was evaluated November 14, 2006. At this time it was evident that there was a residual chemical influence affecting the cover crop establishment. In discussing the situation with the farmer, it was determined that Command was used at planting. However, due to low rainfall throughout the growing season, it was likely that full activation was not achieved. Rainfall associated with the timing of cover crop seeding, probably resulted in activation of residual activity. This result can be considered non-typical (2006 drought).

## **2007 Activities:**

Percent cover evaluations were taken on 3 dates (Feb. 8, Mar. 14, and Mar. 22). The March 22<sup>nd</sup> evaluation collected dry matter yield samples from 1 ft sq. random sample areas, with 2 samples per plot. Sweet potato yield and grade were evaluated at harvest (October, 2007) to determine insect impact related to cover crops. Cover crops for Year 2 of the study were planted by hand on October 11, 2007.

## **References:**

Herby Bloodworth and Mike Lane, Technical Note No. 9, 1994, PROJECT REPORT SWEET POTATO RESPONSE to COVER CROPS and CONSERVATION TILLAGE.

Herby Bloodworth and Mike Lane, Technical Note No. 10, 1995. PROGRESS REPORT, Establishment Methods of Sweetpotato in a Conservation Tillage System

Herby Bloodworth, Larry Golden, and Ken Ainsworth, Technical Note Vol. 12 No. 11. December 1996. Cover Crops and C-factors for Conservation Tilled Sweetpotato

Scott Edwards, Herby Bloodworth, and Mike Lane, Technical Note Vol. 13 No. 5, February 1998. Establishment Methods of Sweetpotato in a Conservation Tillage System.

Scott Edwards, Bill Benoist, Herby Bloodworth and Mike Lane , Technical Note Vol. 13 No. 6, June 1998. A Guide to Conservation Tillage Sweetpotato Production.

R.C. Sloan, Jr., N.W. Buehring, W.B. Burdine, Jr., and J. L. Main. Sweetpotato Coover Crops and Reduced Tillage. North MS Research and Extension Report. 1993.

W.B. Burdine, Jr., J.G. White, P.G. Thompson, and J.L. Main. Cover Crop Soil Conservation System for Sweetpotato Production. 2000.

## 2007 Preliminary Data Collected

Cover crop	Percent Cover (%)			Dry Matter Yield lbs/ac	Plot Yields (lbs)		
	02/08	03/14	03/22		cull	grade 1	canner
Balansa clover	61	95	97	2194	5.1	8.8	11.0
Conventional till	75	89	88	346	6.2	5.7	7.5
Crimson clover	45	72	68	1938	8.6	11.2	10.8
Hairy vetch	70	100	100	3022	8.4	9.3	6.8
Mercer rye	77	69	51	4345	17.2	10.8	13.0
Minimum till	71	83	88	346	6.8	8.2	8.2
Rye	81	80	69	2650	5.3	6.4	8.4
Rye/ Balansa	82	93	98	2754	5.9	12.6	12.1
Wheat	43	42	36	731	7.5	7.3	9.0

## **Propagation Methods of Rivercane [*Arundinaria gigantea* (Walt.) Muhl.]**

Study Number : MSPMC-T-0701-TE  
Study Leader: MSPMC  
Duration: 2007-2011  
Cooperators: John Ouellette, Research coordinator, Memphis Zoo; Dr. Scott Franklin, Asst. Prof. Dept of Biology, Univ. of Memphis, Brian Rude, Assoc. Prof., Dept of Animal and Dairy Sciences, and Dr. Brian Baldwin, Assoc. Prof. Agronomy, Dept. of Plant and Soil Sciences, MSU.

### **Introduction:**

Rivercane [*Arundinaria gigantea* (Walt.) Muhl.] has been widely displaced in its native range. Attempts to reestablish the species is limited by methods of propagation and planting. Methodologies developed for propagation of bamboo will be assessed for its application to rivercane. If methodologies prove successful, this will provide the plant materials to establish this native species back to its native range, providing a unique habitat for wildlife.

Rivercane is the largest native grass in the U.S. It occurs in the southern and southeastern states from Texas and Oklahoma and eastward to West Virginia, Delaware and Florida. *Tecta* and *gigantea* are two subspecies of *Arundinaria gigantea*. Rivercane is a culturally significant plant for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. Cane fiber is used in Choctaw basketry and other tribal crafts. Limited research has been conducted to determine a method for propagating cane. One promising method is to plant culms and rhizomes, and culms attached to rhizomes. Reports indicate that planting culms with attached rhizomes provide larger, more vigorous plants than culms planted alone. Objective of this study is to determine if greenhouse propagation of rivercane (subspecies *tecta*) is possible and evaluate different propagation mediums.

### **2007 Activities:**

In the spring of 2007, a portion of the existing plant material was planted on the MSPMC to evaluate plant establishment, vigor, and growth as related to sun vs. shade conditions and the distance from flowing/standing water.

## Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum* L.) Tolerance to Common Agricultural Rates of Glyphosate

Study Number: MSPMC-T-0701-BU  
Study Leader: MSPMC  
Duration: 2007-2009

### Introduction:

The Vegetative Barrier Practice Standard 601 was adopted in 2001. This technology has demonstrated the ability to use narrow strips (3 feet) of dense, stiff stemmed vegetative material (e.g. switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum* L.)) to serve as vegetative terraces, vegetative filter strips, and vegetative check dams for trapping sediment, deconcentrating flow, and stabilizing headcuts.

However, as the primary area of application is cropland, and with the proliferation of herbicide (glyphosate) tolerant crops, there has been an unwillingness within the conservation community to install this practice for fear of vegetative injury or death from herbicide drift. This has prevented widespread utilization of this vegetative practice and has prevented acceptance of this practice as a cost-share practice within Mississippi.

The purpose of this study is therefore to document the herbicide (glyphosate) tolerance of switchgrass ('Alamo') under establishment and established conditions. Additionally the clipped and unclipped established vegetative barrier conditions will be evaluated. The study will also incorporate a herbicide that will kill switchgrass to demonstrate that switchgrass control is not being compromised by building herbicide resistance to glyphosate.

## **Improving Soil Degradation Created by Vegetative Barriers**

Study Number: MSPMC-T-0112-CP  
Duration: 2001-2006  
Cooperators: Seth Dabney, Agronomist, ARS, Oxford, MS

### **Introduction:**

Conservation Practice Standard 601 was developed to govern the use of vegetative barriers to control erosion in sloping cropland. These barriers are highly effective in preventing soil from leaving agricultural fields, but because soil is moved through tillage and erosion from the upper portion of the area between the barriers and deposited above the next barrier, soil quality below each barrier decreases.

Objectives of the study are: 1) determine if benching has altered soil properties affecting crop productivity; 2) determine effectiveness of management alternatives at varying positions within benches for restoring crop productivity and profitability.

#### Treatments:

- 1) No poultry litter
  - 2) 1X rate (4 tons) of poultry litter
  - 3) 2X rate (8 tons) of poultry litter
- Tillage (disking) vs. no tillage over all litter treatments  
Deep tillage (paratilling) vs. no deep tillage immediately below the hedge only

### **2004 Activities:**

No treatments were applied in 2004. Soybeans were planted in late May to early June when the wheat that was planted the previous fall was harvested. A second planting of soybeans was required due to poor stands. USDA-ARS personnel from Oxford and Starkville monitored yields of the wheat and soybeans and conducted soil testing at multiple depths during the mid-summer.

### **2005 Activities:**

In the spring of 2005, poultry litter was applied at the treatment rates described above. Corn was planted in the spring. The yield was as described below. In all years, the lower parts of formerly tilled fallow benches (positive lynchets) were more productive than the upper parts where the subsurface fragipan was shallower and fertility levels were lower. During the summer the degrading upper parts (negative lynchets) were more droughty than the aggrading lower parts. In contrast, during the winter, the upper parts tended to be wetter as water moving laterally down the hillslopes seeped out of the hillside.

Averaged over manure application, similar results were obtained for corn grown in 2005 (Table 1).

**Table 1. Within-bench position and management history affected corn grain yield in 2005, averaged over manure treatment.**

Tillage	Tilled Fallow History			Sod History		
	Lower	Middle	Upper	Lower	Middle	Upper
	kg ha-1					
Till	5300	4400	2700	7309	4300	4000
No-till	3500	1700	1400	2300	1600	2900

**Table 2. Manure affected above ground biomass production and N uptake where incorporated by tillage, but not in no-till (averaged across position).**

Manure	Above-ground Biomass		N percentage		N uptake	
	Till	No-till	Till	No-till	Till	No-till
	kg ha-1		%		kg ha-1	
0	11600	7100	1.01	1.18	117	86
1	14600	13000	0.96	0.59	142	77
2	16800	10400	0.86	0.58	147	63

**Table 3. Manure affected grain yield and N uptake where incorporated by tillage, but not in no-till (averaged across position).**

Manure	Grain Yield		N percentage		Grain N uptake	
	Till	No-till	Till	No-till	Till	No-till
	kg ha-1		%		kg ha-1	
0	3800	2200	1.6	1.7	61	37
1	4400	2500	1.7	1.6	75	40
2	5900	2100	1.5	1.1	89	23

Manure increased corn biomass more (Table 2) and grain yields only (Table 3) when it had been incorporated by tillage. There were no interactions between slope position and manure or tillage. Biomass N percentage was highest in the zero manure plots that were fertilized with ammonium nitrate, but grain yield was lowest. This result suggesting that some factor other than N, likely P, was limiting productivity.

## 2006 Activities:

Winter wheat was planted in the fall of 2005 and was followed by no-till soybeans in the spring of 2006, however, the soybean crop failed due to the drought. Wheat yields are reflective of the spring 2005 tillage/manure treatments. No additional treatments were made since.

The data from Table 4 indicates that yield is increased by manure application only with a tillage treatment. The highest manure treatment with tillage provided the highest yield at 74 bu/ac.

**Table 4. 2005 wheat yields resulting from manure and tillage treatments (applied 2005).**

Tillage	Manure Tons / ac	Manure Mg / ha	Yield Bu / ac	Yield Kg / ha
0	0	0	32	2154
0	4	9	33	2188
0	8	18	25	1674
1	0	0	32	2158
1	4	9	52	3514
1	8	18	74	4951

Note: wheat, 60 lbs/bu; 1 ton/ac = 2.24 Mg/ha; 1 bu/ac (60 lb) = 67.19 Kg/ha

In the spring of 2007, another manure/tillage treatment was applied, and corn was planted.

## Agroforestry Alley Cropping Demonstration

Study Number: MSPMC-T-0117-CP  
Duration: 2001-2010  
Cooperators: National Agroforestry Center; Jim Robinson (ret.), NRCS, Ft. Worth, TX, Jerry Lemunyon, NRCS, Ft. Worth, TX and Seth Dabney, USDA-ARS, Oxford, MS

### Introduction:

Agroforestry combines agriculture and forestry technologies to create diverse, profitable and sustainable land-use systems. One of the agroforestry practices that may appeal to many landowners is alley cropping (Conservation Practice 311). Alley cropping is the planting of trees or shrubs with agronomic, horticultural or forage crops cultivated in the alley between the rows of woody plants, giving farmers the option of growing different crops in the same field to create a diversified farming enterprise. Conservation benefits of alley cropping include but are not limited to reducing surface runoff and erosion, improving nutrient management, and increasing wildlife habitat.

In 2002 the PMC began cooperating with the National Agroforestry Center to demonstrate the potential for alley cropping in the Southeast using high value trees combined with no-till crops planted on sloping topography. A 5 acre hillside of Loring silt loam soil (up to an 8% slope) at the PMC was chosen as the study site. Trees were planted in single rows along the general contour of the field and perpendicular to the dominant slope on angles convenient for farming using the CORE4 recommendations. Trees species include pecan [*Carya illinoensis* (Wangenh.) K. Koch], which will provide an intermediate income from nut production in addition to future timber production, and green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica* Marsh.), which is a fairly fast-growing timber species.

### 2007 Activity:

The site was planted on April 4 and was harvested on September 17. The variety was DEKALB 69-72 which is a Round-up Ready™ + Bt corn. Dual II Magnum® (metolachlor) at 1.0 pints/acre + atrazine (4L) at 1 quart/acre was the preemerge used. The insecticide application was Lorsban® 4E for cutworm control. The preemerge and insecticide went out at planting time. One application of glyphosate (4lb) + ammonium sulfate was made postemergence at a rate of 1 quart + 1 pint/acre on May 15. Corn was harvested at 14.5% moisture. Yield was 124.40 bu/acre. The rows adjacent to either side of the trees were noticeably shorter. This could have been from the drier conditions we had during the early part of the growing season as both the trees and corn were using what little moisture was there or from the actual shading of the trees or from nutrient competition, or from combinations of moisture, shade and nutrients.

Early-planted soybeans (2008) was next in the scheduled rotation and was to be followed by wheat double-cropped with soybeans (2008-09) and corn again (2010) after that. That same rotation will be used until it becomes unfeasible because of the trees. Forage or hay crops may still be utilized after row crop production will have ended.

**Summary of data to date (economic contribution of the trees not considered)**

Year	Crop	*Input / ac	Yield (bu / ac)	Price / bu	**Net return / ac
2002	soybean	\$97	26	\$5.32 (Oct. 2002)	<b>\$41.32</b>
2003	wheat	\$118	54	\$3.08 (June 2003)	\$48.32
	soybean	\$91	41	\$7.05 (Nov 2003)	\$198.05
					<b>total \$246.37</b>
2004	corn	\$265	180	\$2.20 (Sept 2004)	<b>\$131.00</b>
2005	soybean	\$108	47	\$5.75 (Nov 2005)	<b>\$162.25</b>
2006	wheat	\$148	61.2	\$3.99 (June 2006)	\$96.19
	soybean	\$63.50	0		(63.50)
					<b>total \$32.69</b>
2007	corn	\$221.20	124.4	\$2.85 (Sept 2007)	<b>\$133.34</b>

\*[Input cost figures obtained from http://www.agecon.msstate.edu/research/budgets.php](http://www.agecon.msstate.edu/research/budgets.php)

\*\*Yield x Price - Input Cost = Net

## **Evaluation of Low Growing Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum* L.) Ecotypes for Reduced Seed Dormancy**

Study Number: MSPMC-P-0208-BU  
Duration: 2001-2010  
Cooperators: Brian Baldwin and Paul Meints, Mississippi State University

### **Introduction:**

Many of the switchgrass cultivars that were released by the PM program, University, and ARS grass breeders are tall, robust types that may not be as well suited as low-growing ecotypes for some conservation practices such as vegetative barriers (Conservation Practice 601), critical areas (Conservation Practice 342), and wildlife habitat plantings (Conservation Practice 645) in the southeastern U.S. Selection for reduced seed dormancy in switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum* L.) has been shown to be a viable method for cultivar development. The PMC has an assembly of 92 collections of switchgrass with varying heights ranging from tall (7-8 or more ft), medium (5-6 ft), and short (4-3 ft) from which new selections can be made for cultivar release. We are using recurrent selection breeding techniques, selecting seedlings that germinate in the shortest period of time from switchgrass accessions in the short stature range that will then be allowed to cross and produce a short cultivar that establishes quickly to out-compete weeds.

### **2004 Activity:**

Twelve accessions were selected from the assembly that ranged in heights from 3 to 4.5 ft. These selections were transplanted in a 12 x 12 Latin square on 16 April 2002 (Table 1). Accession 9062816 lodged severely and 9062767 did not produce viable seed, so they were replaced with low-growing switchgrass plants from Dr. Brian Baldwin's research at Mississippi State University. This planting constituted the mother block nursery. Seeds were collected from these elites in the fall of 2004 for selection of early-germinating seedlings (Cycle 1 in the selection process) and were planted in a polycross block in 2005. Any plants that exceed the desired height range were removed from all crossing blocks.

**Table 1. Accessions and origins of 12 elite (most desirable) switchgrasses.**

Accession	Origin
9062767*	Monroe Co., MS
9062836	Madison Co., MS
9062764	Chickasaw Co., MS
9062852	Montgomery Co., MS
9062788	Monroe Co., MS
9062816*	Carroll Co., MS
9062828	Clay Co., MS
9062763	Chickasaw Co., MS
9062829	Chickasaw Co., MS
9062789	Lamar Co., AL
9062802	Winston Co., MS
9062811	Lonoke Co., AR

\* Replaced with MSU selections.

### **2005 Activity:**

Accession obtained from storage and existing plant populations were screened for immediate germination four months after harvest. Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum* L.) Upland biotype, is a component of the short grass prairie of North America. Germination tests were conducted according to AOSA protocols. Screening was conducted on bulked seed of individual crossing blocks under the same conditions. Unselected plant populations were screened (in previous years) for rapid germination of individual seedlings. Subsequent screenings of first cycle were conducted to advance individual populations.

Advancement has been observed in the selected population. Progress on the upland biotype of switchgrass is not quite as far along as those advanced generations of lowland switchgrass planted at Starkville (pre-stratification germination cycle 0 = 0.5%; cycle 1 = 27%).

**Table 2. Response of Switchgrass to selection for reduced seed dormancy.**

Species	Cycle of Selection	Pre-stratification Germination† (%)	Germination After Stratification ‡ (%)
Switchgrass (Upland)	0	0.67	4.17
	1	4.00	17.67

† Pre-stratification germination over a 14 d germination under 16 hr/8hr day/light and 30° light/20° C dark temperature.

‡ Germination percentage after 14 d moist stratification at 3° C followed by return to germination conditions [14 d under 16 hr/8hr (day/light) and 30° light/20° C dark temperature].

**2006 Activity:**

Cycle 2 was planted in June 2006 transplants that had been germinated and grown out at Mississippi State. Due to drought conditions, transplants were watered regularly until establishment occurred. Seed was collected from the Cycle 2 block in the fall of 2006 and germination test will be conducted in January 2007.

**2007 Activity:**

Seed from the Cycle 2 block was germinated in late winter of 2007. The resulting plants were planted in the spring for the Cycle 3 block.

## Selecting for Improved Seedling Establishment in Beaked Panicum (*Panicum anceps* Michx.)

Study Number: MSPMC-P-0209-BU  
Duration: 2002-2006  
Cooperators: Brian Baldwin and Paul Meints, Mississippi State University

### Introduction:

The PMC evaluated large collections of numerous accessions of beaked panicum (*Panicum anceps* Michx.) in the 1980s and the East Texas PMC is currently evaluating several accessions. Beaked panicum is not highly productive as a forage crop, but it has potential for critical area stabilization and is shade tolerant. Beaked panicum is a component of the short grass prairie of North America. Seeds exhibit dormancy that affects germination. Stratification has been shown to overcome this dormancy, but stratified seeds would be difficult to plant using conventional equipment. Selection for reduced dormancy has been illustrated in native warm-season grasses such as switchgrass (*P. virgatum* L.) and these techniques may also be possible to develop beaked panicum sources with reduced dormancy.

### 2004 Activity:

The original mother plant nursery (Cycle 0), planted in 2002, contained seedlings of eight accessions of beaked panicum (9002928, 9028510, 9067071, 9067121, 9067102, 9067094, 9067079, and an unnumbered collection from Carroll Co., MS). This nursery was destroyed in 2004; however, seeds were collected from this block in both 2002 and 2003. Since this block was destroyed, the seedlings that resulted from its seed constituted the new mother plant nursery. There were 35 early germinating seedlings from seeds collected from the mother plant nursery in 2002 that were planted in the field on August 5, 2003.

This was not enough seedlings to constitute an acceptable crossing block, so additional plantings using the seeds collected from the original mother plant nursery in both 2002 and 2003 were made on January 20, 2004. In the previous year, the seeds were planted in flats of potting media and exposed to ambient conditions in the greenhouse for germination. However, in 2004, we counted 50 samples of 50 seeds of each seed lot and germinated them on filter paper in Petri dishes. The dishes were placed in a germinator maintained at 20°C/30°C (night/day) with lights on for 10 hours per day during the day cycle. The seeds were allowed to germinate for 14 days, with counts made at 7 day intervals. After 14 days, the seedlings were transplanted into cell packs; however, there were only 19 seedlings planted from the 2002 seed lot containers and 10 from the 2003. We decided to extend the germination period for an additional 14 days.

Counts were again made at 7 day intervals and seedlings were transplanted into cell packs when large enough to survive this process. During this period, a total of 29 additional 2002 lot seedlings and 9 2003 lot seedlings were planted.

Germination percentages averaged only 2.6% for the 2002 lot and 1% for the 2003 lot. A few seedlings were too weak or deformed and were not transplanted.

The dishes were then placed into a cooler maintained at approximately 7°C to expose the seeds to cold stratification. Germination counts were made every 7 days for 21 days. No seedlings were retained after stratification; this treatment was only to judge the levels of dormancy in the seed lots. The 2002 seed lot averaged 12% and the 2003 seed lot averaged 36% germination, indicating that dormancy was reduced in the 2002 seed, which had been stored at room temperature since collection. The seedlings were transplanted into 4" square containers when they had reached sufficient size. They were then added to the new mother plant nursery in May. Currently, there are 81 plants in the new mother plant nursery. None of the plants in the new nursery produced sufficient seed to harvest in 2004.

Accession 9002928 was identified as a superior accession during prior PMC testing and seed stocks had been increased for several years. This accession germinated well in the greenhouse in 2002, so it was decided that a new seed increase field would be planted. It was planted in the fall of 2002 using a Lilliston no-till drill. A large quantity of seed was planted to ensure a full stand and it germinated well in the field. The rows were spaced closer than was practical to maintain, so the field was sprayed with glyphosate in July or August using a hooded sprayer to define wider rows. The first year, little seed was produced, so this field was not harvested; however, seeds were to be harvested in the fall of 2005.

### **2005 Activity:**

Accession obtained from storage and existing plant populations were screened for immediate germination four months after harvest. Germination tests were conducted according to AOSA protocols. Screening was conducted on bulked seed of individual crossing blocks under the same conditions. Beaked panicum which was pooled for two growing seasons to obtain enough seed for the initial screening (this year).

The initial screening germination for the Beaked panicum is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Response of Beaked Panicum to selection for reduced seed dormancy.**

Species	Cycle of Selection	Pre-stratification Germination† (%)	Germination After Stratification ‡ (%)
Beaked Panicum	0	0	6.67

† Pre-stratification germination over a 14 d germination under 16 hr/8hr day/light and 30° light/20° C dark temperature.

‡ Germination percentage after 14 d moist stratification at 3° C followed by return to germination conditions [14 d under 16 hr/8hr (day/light) and 30° light/20° C dark temperature].

**2006 Activity:**

Seedlings were unable to be established by Mississippi State University and therefore a cycle 1 crossing block could not be established at the MSPMC in the summer of 2006. Cycle 0 seed will be germinated and grown out for the Cycle 1 planting in 2007.

**2007 Activity:**

Poor germination prevented us from producing enough plants for a Cycle 1 planting.

**Summary:**

We have not made as much progress with beaked panicum as we have with some of the other native warm-season grasses that we are developing using similar techniques. We can also pursue release of 9002928 if it proves to be easy to establish. This will need to be determined using fresh seed, not seed lots that have been stored in the cooler for 10 or more years. Various researchers have demonstrated that dormancy of switchgrass seeds can be relieved by storing the seeds at room temperature. From the results of the stratification treatment, it appears that dormancy of the closely-related beaked panicum can also be reduced by this treatment.

## Selecting for Improved Seedling Establishment in Purpletop [*Tridens flavus* (L.) A.S. Hitchc.]

Study Number: MSPMC-P-0210-BU  
Duration: 2002-2006  
Cooperators: Brian Baldwin and Paul Meints, Mississippi State University

### Introduction:

The PMC evaluated a large collection with numerous accessions of purpletop [*Tridens flavus* (L.) A.S. Hitchc.] in the 1980s. Purpletop is a component of the short grass prairie of North America. It has limited potential as a forage crop, but can be used for critical area stabilization and has some shade tolerance. Seeds exhibit dormancy that adversely affects germination. Stratification has been shown to overcome this dormancy, but stratified seeds would be difficult to plant using conventional equipment. Selection for reduced dormancy has been illustrated in native warm-season grasses such as switchgrass (*P. virgatum*). Recurrent selection techniques could also be used to develop sources of purpletop with reduced seed dormancy.

### 2004 Activity:

The mother plant nursery that was planted in 2002 contained seedlings from three accessions (9028270, 9041780, and 9028355) and eleven unnumbered local collections (one from the Natchez Trace Parkway, five from Carroll Co., MS and one each from Franklin Co., Yalobusha Co., Lincoln Co., Pontotoc Co., and Grenada Co., MS). Each year seeds are collected from the mother plant nursery (Cycle 0) and the subsequent selection cycles and germination tests are performed to determine the progress that has been made in improving germination. The Cycle 1 crossing block was planted in 2003 and assigned the accession number 9077113.

Seeds collected from the Cycle 1 crossing block in the fall of 2003 were planted in germination flats containing a commercial seed germination potting mix on February 18 and placed in the germinator set at 20°C/30°C (night/day) with lights on for 10 hours per day during the day cycle. The seedlings became leggy due to low light levels, so they were moved to the greenhouse on March 4. Seed germination was good and only the largest, most vigorous seedlings were selected for transplanting. The crossing block (Cycle 2) to be planted in the field was to contain 12 rows with 12 plants in each row (144 seedlings); however, additional seedlings were transplanted into cell packs to allow for any potential losses. The seedlings were moved up into 4" pots when they reached sufficient size. The Cycle 2 crossing block was planted on June 7. These seedlings were assigned the accession number 9077134. All seedlings survived and flowered. Seeds were collected from all crossing blocks in September and October.

A germination test was conducted on seeds from the mother plant nursery and the Cycle 1 crossing block. An electronic seed counter was used to count five replications of 100 seeds of each lot which were placed in between two sheets of filter paper in Petri dishes and put in the germinator on January 20. Hairs on the lemma and palea, caused the seed to clump together and they did not count accurately. Seeds from the mother plant nursery averaged 1.4% and those from the Cycle 1 lot averaged 4.4% germination. The dishes were placed in a refrigerator for 14 days to provide a stratification treatment. Germination counts were conducted weekly for an additional 14 days, and then the number of seeds remaining in the dish were counted to determine the total number of seeds in each dish so that we could calculate germination percentages.

Additional germination for the mother plant nursery seeds was 95% and for the Cycle 1 seeds additional germination was 90%. Because of the counting problems encountered in the first germination test, another test was initiated on April 27. For this test, the seeds were run through a brush machine to remove the lemma and palea. Samples of 100 seeds were counted and tested as above, except the germination period was 21 days and no stratification treatment was applied. Seeds from the mother plant nursery averaged 63% and those from the Cycle 1 lot averaged 73% germination.

Additional testing was also conducted in 2004 to attempt to determine the sources of dormancy in purpletop seed. The lemma and palea that surrounds the caryopsis was removed (hulled) from Cycle 1 seeds collected in 2003 by rubbing them between two sheets of sandpaper in a small box. Six replications of 100 hulled and unhulled seeds were counted out by hand; for the unhulled seed care was taken to select single, fully formed spikelets to avoid immature ones and ones that had not separated completely from neighboring ones in the panicle. The seeds were placed in Petri dishes between layers of filter paper and germinated for 14 days in the germinator (same settings as used for the germination test above), beginning on February 18. The seeds were then stratified for 14 days in the refrigerator using the same methods as for the germination test. Germination counts were made for an additional 14 days with counts made every 7 days. The second run of this experiment, which began on November 23, was identical to the first, except the lemma and palea were removed by running the seeds through a brush machine. Results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Effect of removing the palea and lemma on germination of purpletop seeds.**

Test date	Treatment	Germination		
		Initial	Stratified	Total
		-----%-----		
02/18/2004	intact	23	58a	81a
	hull	32NS <sup>1</sup>	4b	32b
11/23/2004	intact	38b <sup>2</sup>	59a	96NS
	hull	79a	5b	81

<sup>1</sup> Not significant at P<0.05.

<sup>2</sup> Pairs of values in columns with different letters are significantly different at P<0.05.

During the course of conducting the hulling test, we noticed that the hulled seeds were often covered with fungal growth and it was generally less pronounced for the intact seeds. We wanted to determine if we could use a fungicide (Captan) to prevent this fungal growth and further improve germination of the hulled seeds. This study was initiated on April 1. The seeds were hulled as was done in the initial hulling test (i.e. using sandpaper). The seeds were separated from the chaff using a South Dakota, they were screened using a 6 X 22 screen, and four replications of 100 hulled seeds were counted for each treatment by hand and placed in a Petri dish between two layers of filter paper. Captan (wettable powder formulation containing 48.9% Captan and 1.1 % related derivatives) was applied at the label rate of 3 tablespoons per gallon. The Captan dishes were treated using 3 ml of the fungicide solution at initial wetting and they were watered using distilled water alone at subsequent irrigations. The Petri dishes were placed in the germinator set at 15°C/30°C (night/day) with lights on for 10 hours per day during the day cycle. Germination counts were made weekly for 21 days. This test was only run once.

**Table 2. Effect of Captan treatment on germination of hulled purpletop seeds.**

Treatment	Initial (7days)	-----%-----	Total
	Control		
Captan	32a	83a	

<sup>1</sup> Pairs of values in columns with different letters are significantly different at P<0.05.

An additional test was conducted to attempt to determine if water-soluble inhibitors are present in the lemma and palea prevent germination and promote dormancy. For this test seeds collected in the fall of 2003 from the Cycle 1 crossing block were used. The lemma and palea were removed by squeezing between the fingernails of the thumb and index finger. The treatments consisted of hulled seeds being germinated in the dish with the hulled material present (but not touching) the seeds and the other treatment with the hulls removed. This hulling method was extremely time-consuming, so 4 reps of only 25 seeds were used for each treatment.

The dishes for the first run were placed in the germinator on March 31 and it was set at 15°C/30°C (night/day) with lights on for 10 hours per day during the day cycle. Seeds were germinated for 21 days with counts made weekly. In most dishes, all seeds had germinated by the end of the germination period. This test was repeated on November 22, using the same methods except the germinator was set at the standard 20°C/30°C temperatures. Germination in most all of the dishes was at or near 100%, except for two that dried severely after the first count. Germination in those dishes was still 92% and 84%.

To determine how the results of these germinator studies translate to seeds planted in the field, another study was initiated to determine germination of hulled and unhulled seeds that were either treated with Captan or left untreated. A sample of seeds from the 2003 Cycle 1 seed lot was run through brush machine for the hulling treatment. They were then cleaned by using a South Dakota seed blower and screened to produce a clean seed sample. The treatments consisted of 250 seeds for each treatment replicated three times. The hulled seeds were counted with a mechanical seed counter and the intact seeds were counted by hand. Captan was applied by dusting the same formulation used in the previous study on the seeds at planting. The area in the field where this study was to be planted was initially burned down using 1 qt/ac or a generic glyphosate formulation (4 lb ai/gal) on March 25. Although weed control was fairly good, an additional treatment using Gramoxone (1 lb ai/ac) was made right before planting. The seeds were planted on April 28 in shallow rows (10 feet long) formed in the soil. The soil was then firmed back over the seeds. Accurate germination counts were difficult because of weed growth and also due to plant tillering. Counts were made sporadically during the growing season, with the final count in December after annual weeds had senesced. Also on December 7, a 3-foot-long section of the row was sampled to determine the number of flowering culms. Data is presented in Table 3; however, no statistical analysis was possible due to the sampling difficulty.

**Table 3. Germination counts and number of culms recorded for purpletop seed hulling/Captan treatment field test.**

Treatment	Seedling counts				# Culms
	05/20	06/15	09/03	12/03	
	-----Per row (250 seeds planted)-----				Per 3 ft row
Intact	2	60	81	51	44
Hulled	2	40	55	60	32
Intact with Captan	1	75	55	41	24
Hulled with Captan	6	42	54	40	31

**2005 Activity:**

Accession obtained from storage and existing plant populations were screened for immediate germination four months after harvest. Germination tests were conducted according to AOSA protocols. Screening was conducted on bulked seed of individual crossing blocks under the same conditions. Unselected plant populations were screened (in previous years) for rapid germination of individual seedlings. Subsequent screenings of first cycle (and second cycle in case of purpletop) were conducted to advance individual populations.

Advancement has been observed in the selected populations (Table 4). Purpletop has made significant progress, and the post-stratification germination indicates the quality and viability of this seed with a combine germination of 77-92% viable seed.

**Table 4. Response of Purpletop for reduced seed dormancy.**

Species	Cycle of Selection	Pre-stratification Germination† (%)	Germination After Stratification ‡ (%)
Purpletop	0	1.17	83.00
	1	1.17	75.33
	2	15.17	76.83

† Pre-stratification germination over a 14 d germination under 16 hr/8hr day/light and 30° light/20° C dark temperature.

‡ Germination percentage after 14 d moist stratification at 3° C followed by return to germination conditions [14 d under 16 hr/8hr (day/light) and 30° light/20° C dark temperature].

**2006 Activity:**

Cycle 3 was planted in June 2006 transplants that had been germinated and grown out at Mississippi State. Due to drought conditions, transplants were watered regularly until establishment occurred. Seed was collected from the Cycle 3 block in the fall of 2006 and germination test will be conducted in January 2007.

**2007 Activity:**

Seed from the Cycle 3 block was germinated in late winter and planted in spring for the Cycle 4 planting.

## Summary:

Germination percentages have been improved during each cycle of selection as expected. There is little phenotypic diversity in purpletop plants, so once germination percentages have reached an acceptable point, there is little if any other selection that needs to be made. It appears that germination rate and vigor of the Cycle 2 plants (accession 9077134) were high enough to justify release of this material. All available seed was hand-collected from this block to plant a field to increase in order to obtain enough for release. The field selected for the increase planting required an additional year of preparation to control weeds, so the planting is scheduled for 2006. Further germination testing will take place in 2005 on seed collected the previous fall to verify that germination percentages continued to improve for seeds collected from the Cycle 2 plants compared to the previous cycles.

The study on removal of the palea and lemma shows that early germination can be greatly improved by this treatment (Table 1). Hulled seed would be easier to plant because a planter with a fluffy seed box would not be necessary. The low total germination for the hulled seed in the first run shows that the method used to remove the coverings (rubbing between sand paper) was too vigorous and damaged the seeds. Germination of the hulled seeds in the second run was slightly lower than for the intact seeds (Table 1); however, the difference was not significant, indicating that if the hull can be removed through gentler means, it will not adversely affect germination. Although removal of the lemma and palea improved early germination, it could affect the ability of the seeds to withstand adverse environmental conditions or fungal attack in the field. This would need to be determined using larger-scale field plantings. Even with this concern, it appears that developing commercially feasible methods to hull purpletop seeds, possibly using a roller-type device similar to those used to hull rice seeds, is an avenue that should be explored.

The Captan test shows that this fungicide can improve the germination of hulled seeds (Table 2). It is not known if this increase is due entirely to the suppression of fungal growth or if Captan has some germination-promoting effects on purpletop seeds, as this has been noted for some other species. Interestingly, the germination of the Captan - treated seed was high, even though the seeds were hulled using sandpaper. It is difficult to provide uniform treatment of all seeds using this method and perhaps the seed coats and/or embryos were not as seriously damaged during this treatment for this test.

Results of the test with the removed lemma and palea being either present or absent from the germination containers shows that there are no water soluble inhibitors in these structures that affects germination. Either the inhibitors are not water soluble, which is highly unlikely, or the effect of the palea and lemma is mechanical. These structures adhere tightly to the caryopsis and it appears they may interfere with emergence of the seedling until natural forces in the soil can soften or degrade them.

It is difficult to glean any trends from the field planting; however, it does appear that the hulling treatment did not adversely affect establishment. Also, the Captan treatment did not appear to promote germination in the field. The planting rate used, which converts to 25 seeds per foot, provided a uniform stand of purpletop and, until further research determines the optimum planting rate, may be an acceptable one for seed production stands.

## Herbicides for Seed Production of ‘Highlander’ Eastern Gamagrass [*Tripsacum dactyloides* (L.) L.]

Study Number: MSPMC-T-0524-PA  
Duration: 2005-2007  
Cooperators: John Byrd, Al Rankins – Mississippi State University,  
Charles Meister – University of Florida

### Introduction:

Highlander eastern gamagrass was released in 2003 to be primarily used as a forage crop (Grabowski et al., 2003). In order to produce sufficient seed for the commercial market, growers need effective herbicide treatments that can be legally applied to the crop. The main focus of this research is to develop herbicide recommendations for seed producers; however, many of the herbicides tested may also have application for establishment of Highlander for forage production and other conservation practices.

There are currently no herbicides that are labeled for eastern gamagrass establishment. Because Highlander will not be grown on large acreages, it is unlikely that chemical companies would be willing to pursue labeling of herbicides for this crop. This makes it an ideal candidate for the IR-4 (Interregional Research Project No.4) program, a cooperative effort between the state agricultural experiment stations, the Cooperative State Research, Education and, and Extension Service, and the USDA, Agricultural Research Service to register pesticides for use on minor crops.

Eastern gamagrass is a close relative of corn, so it likely would be tolerant to many herbicides used for corn production. Eberle et al. (2003) used atrazine on their seed establishment plots and the Jamie L. Whitten PMC has used spring applications of this chemical for many years on both seed production fields and study areas where Highlander was planted. Atrazine has activity against both grasses and broadleaves; however, a single application in the spring only provides a limited period of weed control and control of some problem weeds is poor. It might also have applicability for post-emergence use; however, if used in the spring and later in the season, application rates would need to be adjusted to ensure that maximum application rates per acre are not exceeded. Unfortunately, the manufacturer will not expand the current label on atrazine for any additional crops (Charles Meister, personal communication); however, we will still include it in this study as a standard treatment. Growers may still be able to use it for stand establishment if they establish corn with the eastern gamagrass. Dual™ (metolachlor) and Prowl® (pendimethalin) have been used on some established production fields and on newly-planted fields at the Jamie L Whitten PMC to provide preemergence control of grasses; however, further research is needed on all these chemicals to document that they are indeed safe for use at planting and on young stands of Highlander.

Both the Jamie L. Whitten PMC and the PMC in New York have looked at Accent® (nicosulfuron) for post-emergence grass control on established stands of eastern gamagrass. 2,4-D and Aim™ (carfenthrazone) have been used for post-emergence broadleaf control on established Highlander stands at the Jamie L. Whitten PMC and Basagran® (bentazon) has been used for nutsedge (*Cyperus* spp.) control, although it will also control some broadleaves. Tolerance of Highlander to these and other herbicides will also need to be demonstrated before IR-4 clearance can be sought.

<b>Experimental Design:</b>	Randomized Complete Block
<b>Treatment 1:</b>	Title: Establishment treatments Description: Apply herbicides at planting
<b>Treatment 2:</b>	Title: Spring maintenance treatments Description: Apply herbicides on established stands
<b>Treatment 3:</b>	Title: Post-emergence treatments Description: Apply herbicides on established Stands

**Materials and Methods:**

The establishment herbicide testing will be conducted in the greenhouse. Herbicides will be applied using a CO<sub>2</sub> plot sprayer (calibrated to 20 gal/ac) to standard bedding plant flats (1020 size) containing field soil planted with 50 stratified seeds of Highlander. Seeds will be planted 0.5 to 0.75 inch deep. There will be an untreated control. Atrazine will be the standard treatment at a rate of 2 lb ai/ac (2 qt/ac). Other herbicides that will be screened are Dual Magnum® at 2 lb ai/ac (2 pt/ac); Prowl® 3.3EC at 1 lb ai/ac (2.4 pt/ac); Axiom® DF at 0.75 lb ai/ac of FOE 5043 and 0.19 lb ai/ac of metribuzin (22 oz Axiom® /ac); Gallery® 75DF (isoxaben) at 0.75 lb ai/ac (1 lb/ac); Karmex® 4L (diuron) at 1 lb ai/ac (2 pts/ac); Barricade® 65WG (proflaminate) at 0.75 lb ai/ac (1.15 lb/ac); Python® WDG (flumetsulam) at 0.80 oz ai/ac (1 oz/ac); and Frontier® 7.5E (dimethamid) at 1.3 lb ai/ac (22 oz/ac). There will be four replications of each treatment. The number of seedlings that emerge and injury ratings will be recorded at weekly intervals. The shoots will be cut at the soil surface and average dry weight per shoot will be determined to evaluate effect of the treatments on plant growth. Any preemergence herbicides that do not damage the germinating Highlander seeds should be safe to use on established stands and could be used for preemergence control of weeds when applied as spring maintenance treatments.

The spring maintenance herbicide testing will be conducted on stands of Highlander located at the MSPMC. A one-year-old stand (planted in 2004 and 2005) and an established stand (planted in 2002, 2003 or 2004) will be treated in March of 2005 and 2006. Plot size will be 5 foot x 8 foot and there will be three replications of each treatment. There will be an untreated control plot. Herbicide treatments will include atrazine 4L at a rate of 2 lb ai/ac (2 qt/ac); Dual Magnum® at 2 lb ai/ac (2 pt/ac); Prowl® 3.3 EC at 1 lb ai/ac (2.4 pt/ac); Karmex® 4L at 1 lb ai/ac (2 pts/ac); and Axiom® DF at 0.75 lb ai/ac of FOE 5043 and 0.19 lb ai/ac of metribuzin (22 oz. Axiom® /ac). All field herbicide treatments will be applied using the CO<sub>2</sub> plot sprayer as described above. Injury ratings will be taken at 7, 14, 21, and 28 days after treatment. Seed heads will be harvested from the treated area in approximately mid-July, the seeds removed, and weighed to determine if there are any adverse effects of the herbicides on seed production.

The post-emergence testing will be conducted on stands of Highlander located at the MSPMC. A one-year-old stand (planted in 2004 and 2005) and an established stand (planted in 2002, 2003 or 2004) will be treated in May of 2005 and 2006. Plot size will be 5 foot x 8 foot and there will be three replications of each treatment. Atrazine will be applied at 2 lb ai/ac (2 qt/ac) Other herbicides to be tested are: Aim™ 2EC at 0.008 lb ai/ac (0.51 oz/ac) plus nonionic surfactant (0.25% v/v); Clarity 4SL® (dicamba) at 0.25 lb ai/ac (0.5 pt/ac); Permit® 75DF (halosulfuron) at 0.047 lb ai/ac (1 oz/ac) plus crop oil concentrate (1.0% v/v); Accent® 75DF at 0.5 oz ai/ac (0.67 oz/ac) plus crop oil concentrate (1.0% v/v); Evik® 80DF (ametryn) at 1.6 lb ai/ac (2 lb/ac) plus nonionic surfactant (0.25% v/v), and 2,4-D Amine 4L at 1.0 lb ai/ac (2 pt/ac). The crop oil concentrate will be at least 80% active and the nonionic surfactant will be 80% active. There will also be a control plot for comparison purposes. Injury ratings will be taken at 7, 14, 21, and 28 days after treatment. Seed heads will be harvested from the treated area in approximately mid-July, the seeds removed, and weighed to determine if there are any adverse effects of the herbicides on seed production.

## **Evaluation of Little Bluestem [*Schizachyrium scoparium* (Michx.) Nash] Ecotypes for Reduced Seed Dormancy**

Study Number: MSPMC-P-0208-WL  
Duration: 2002-2006  
Cooperators: Brian Baldwin and Paul Meints, Mississippi State University

### **Introduction:**

There are few cultivars of little bluestem [*Schizachyrium scoparium* (Michx.) Nash] that are adapted to the PMC service area, especially for the southern reaches of the area, and seed is difficult to obtain from commercial sources. With the growing emphasis on planting native warm-season grasses in many farm programs for erosion control and wildlife habitat, cultivar development is a priority. Seed dormancy is a major factor affecting field establishment of little bluestem. Selection for reduced dormancy has been illustrated in native grasses such as switchgrass and green needlegrass [*Nassella viridula* (Trin.) Barkworth].

### **2004 Activity:**

A mother plant nursery (Cycle 0) was planted with 300 selections from isolated areas on PMC property and transplanted in four complete blocks (5 rows, 15 plants/row) in 2002. Seeds were collected from individual plants in mother plant nursery in November 2002, placed in paper bags, and stored at room temperature. Replicated germination tests were conducted in January/February 2003 to identify plants that produced seeds that germinated in 14 days without stratification. Analysis of variance was used to determine the top 20 performers. From these 20, the top 12 plants with the highest germination percentages were identified. The seedlings from these 12 and early germinating ones from two other collections made in Madison County were planted in a 14 X 14 Latin square crossing block (Cycle 1) in 2003. Some of these died and sections of the identified plants in the mother block were dug to replace the lost ones on January 14, 2004, taking care to not cause much damage to the original mother plant. A germination test was initiated on March 3 to determine the relative levels of dormancy present in both seed sources. Data for this test is not available.

Some progress has been made in selecting early germinating little bluestem plants for crossing. There is a great deal of phenotypic variability in the both crossing blocks. This is not an undesirable situation; however, we will need to be sure to remove plants with weak stems that lodge from later selection cycles because that tendency interferes with harvesting. Seeds were collected from both the mother plant nursery and the Cycle 1 block in November 2004 for germination testing and further selection will be performed on the Cycle 1 seed lot.

### 2005 Activity:

Accession obtained from storage and existing plant populations were screened for immediate germination four months after harvest. Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) is a components of the short grass prairie of North America. Germination tests were conducted according to AOSA protocols. Screening was conducted on bulked seed of individual crossing blocks under the same conditions.

Unselected plant populations were screened (in previous years) for rapid germination of individual seedlings. Subsequent screenings of first cycle (and second cycle in case of little bluestem) were conducted to advance individual populations.

Advancement has been observed though little bluestem's advance is minimal (Table 1). Little bluestem showed limited initial progress, but this progress seems to have stalled. This is not an indicator of no further potential progress though. It is suspected the pollen load from the adjacent "prairie" (source of the mother plants) is so great that it overwhelms the pollen from the "isolated" elite mother plants. Efforts will be made to enforce isolation from contaminating pollen and the next generation should proceed.

**Table 1. Response of Little Bluestem to selection for reduced seed dormancy.**

Species	Cycle of Selection	Pre-stratification Germination† (%)	Germination After Stratification ‡ (%)
Little Bluestem	0	0.8	2.83
	1	2.7	10.50
	2	1.7	13.50

### 2006 Activity:

Cycle 3 was planted in June 2006 transplants that had been germinated and grown out at Mississippi State. Due to drought conditions, transplants were watered regularly until establishment occurred. Seed was collected from the Cycle 3 block was collected in the fall of 2006 and germination test will be conducted in January 2007.

## **Determining Tolerance of Partridge Pea [*Chamaecrista fasciculata* (Michx.) Greene] and Trailing Wildbean [*Strophostyles helvola* (L.) Elliot] to Preemergence Herbicides**

Study Number: MSPMC-T-0309-WL  
Duration: 2003-2007

### **Introduction:**

Lark Selection partridge pea [*Chamaecrista fasciculata* (Michx.) Greene] and Hopefield Selection trailing wildbean [*Strophostyles helvola* (L.) Elliot] are two native legumes that were released by the Jamie L. Whitten PMC primarily for wildlife habitat improvement. Both species are annuals and do not set seed until fall. Due to the long growing season of these species, weed competition is a problem in PMC production fields. Also, both species are recommended for use in field borders, where they have a high likelihood of being exposed to herbicides sprayed on the adjacent crop. For these reasons, tolerance of these two species to commonly used herbicides needs to be assessed. Previous research has demonstrated the tolerance of these species to several post-emergence herbicides that are recommended locally for soybean production. Both species tolerate Dual™ (metolachlor) for preemergence applications; however, this herbicide provides poor control of many problem weeds such as morning-glories. The tolerance of Lark Selection and Hopefield Selection to additional preemergence herbicides used primarily on soybeans will be determined in this study.

### **2004 Activity:**

The herbicide treatments used are listed in Table 1. Dual™ was included as the standard treatment that we typically use. An untreated control was also included. This study was planted in the same field as the trailing wildbean cultural practice study and the soil type was Oaklimeter silt loam. The herbicides were sprayed on May 11. The field was limed at a rate of 2 ton/ac on April 7. The field was fertilized according to soil test recommendations with 152 lbs P and 60 lbs K by combining the appropriate amounts of 0-46-0 and 0-20-20; this was applied on May 10. Existing weeds were burned down using 1 qt/ac of a generic glyphosate formulation (4 lb ai/gal) and 1 qt/ac 2,4-D (4 lb ai/gal) on April 27. The plot size was 5 foot by 10 foot and there were three replications. The plots were planted on May 5. The partridge pea seeds was scarified and inoculated (Cowpea type) before planting. The trailing wildbean seed was inoculated using *Strophostyles* Special inoculant before it was planted. Planting rate was the recommended broadcast rate of 8 lb/ac of Lark Selection and 10 lb/ac of Hopefield Selection. The seeds were planted by broadcasting them over the plots and raking them into the soil. Injury ratings were taken on May 26 and June 9 (Table 2 and 3). Time constraints did not allow statistical analysis of this data before presentation here.

**2005 Activity:**

In 2005 all treatments in the Trailing Wildbean, except Valor®, recovered from any initial impact of the treatment by the final evaluation.

**2006 Activity:**

As with the cultural practices study, drought prevented establishment of satisfactory stands. Stands were replanted and irrigation applied, however, satisfactory stands were not established, probably due to lateness in season.

**2007 Activity:**

No useful data was obtained in 2007 due to drought conditions. Lack of adequate soil moisture prevented activation of herbicides.

**Summary:**

The herbicides that caused the least injury to Lark Selection were Prowl®, Command®, and Frontier®. Frontier® and Prowl® have greatest activity against grasses, so it is not surprising that they did not injure this legume. The discovery that Command® can be safely used on Lark Selection is exciting because it controls many species of morning glories. Dual™ caused a small amount of injury in the wetter areas of the field. Pursuit® also caused some early injury that the plants seemed to recover from by the second rating. Python® and Scepter® both caused a great deal of injury and Zorial® killed all plants.

Trailing wildbean is not as susceptible to herbicide damage as partridge pea. The only herbicides that injured it were Zorial® and Valor®, and the injury was severe. We noticed in the Valor® plots that the plants that survived the treatment were vigorous, but there was only about a half stand compared to the other plots. Again, the only damage from Dual™ was in wetter areas of the field; however the injury was slight. We often have cool, wet conditions in the spring and for this reason, we might want to examine switching our normal pre-emergence treatment on PMC production fields to one of the herbicides that caused less injury that controls a similar spectrum of weeds.

## **Establishing Chiwapa Japanese Millet [*Echinochloa esculenta* (A. Braun) H. Scholz] in Group IV Soybeans for Waterfowl Habitat**

Study Number: MSPMC-T-0410-WL  
Duration: 2004-2006  
Cooperator: Kevin Nelms, Area Biologist, NRCS, Greenwood, MS

### **Introduction:**

Many growers in the Mid-South have installed water-control structures to allow retention of water on their fields in the winter months to provide habitat for wildlife (Conservation Practice 644). Waterfowl utilized wasted seed from the agronomic crops in addition to weed seeds and other plant parts as their winter food source. However, research by wildlife biologists has shown that seeds of agronomic crops degrade quickly under flooded conditions. Also, the widespread use of Roundup-ready crops in the past decade has severely impacted the number of weeds that are present in the fields to produce seeds or provide other plant parts for food. To ameliorate these circumstances, some growers plant a late-season crop after they harvest their agronomic crops specifically to provide a food source for waterfowl. One popular crop for this use is a 90-day seed-ripening millet. However, in most years, it is difficult to get the millet established due to lack of rainfall in the late summer after the agronomic crop is harvested.

In 1965, the PMC released 'Chiwapa' Japanese millet [*Echinochloa esculenta* (A. Braun) H. Scholz], which is a 120-day millet. In the past, it has not been used as extensively as the shorter-season millet cultivars. However, we realized that it might be possible to seed this millet into an established agronomic crop in the mid-summer, when rainfall and overall soil moisture are better. The seeds could be flown on the fields and would germinate and remain as small plants under the canopy of the agronomic crop until harvest allowed more light penetration for growth. Because this plant is an annual, it would make every attempt to produce seed before frost. We began a study to demonstrate the potential of this approach in producer's fields planted with Group IV soybeans in the Delta (Bolivar, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, and Quitman Counties). June 15, July 15, and August 15 were chosen as target planting dates to use for the initial demonstrations.

## 2004 Data Collected:

Actual planting dates were June 16, July 19, and August 13. Each plot was 30 feet by 50 feet. Chiwapa seeds were broadcast by hand on the plot at the recommended rate of 25 lb/ac. The producers managed their fields using standard agronomic practices.

The study sites in Bolivar, Sunflower and Tallahatchie Counties were terminated before seed yield was determined. General observations by Kevin Nelms in early fall at the Sunflower location revealed good to excellent stands. It was anticipated that this site would have produced a substantial seed crop had it not been destroyed.

Percent stand, seed yield, seed quality (seed fill) and available seed on the ground that shattered prior to harvest were determined at the Quitman County site on Hugh Campbell's farm on December 15, 2004 (Table 1). Percent stand was an estimate of standing and lodged seed stalks in each plot.

Seed yield by planting date was determined from 2 random locations in each plot by hand harvesting seed from a 4 ft<sup>2</sup>. area. Seeds were allowed to dry at room temperature and seed fill determined by removing the palea and lemma to determine condition of the grain.

**Table 1. Percent stand, seed yield, seed quality and available seed on the ground of 'Chiwapa' Japanese millet at Quitman county site, 15 December 2004.**

Planting Date	Percent Stand	Yield	Seed Fill <sup>1/</sup>	Available Seed on the Ground <sup>2/</sup>
June 16	43	80	3	1
July 19	72	144	5	2
August 13	0	0	0	0

1/ Seed fill rating - 1= good; 3 = fair; 5 = poor

2/ Available seed on the ground - 1= good; 3 = fair; 5 = poor

## 2005 Activity:

In 2005, 5 locations in the Delta (Mississippi Valley Alluvial Plain) of Mississippi were planted in this study. The locations were in Quitman, Tallahatchie, Grenada, Humphreys, and Sharkey counties.

All locations are in soybean production and were planted in Group IV maturity varieties in April. Row configurations ranged from wide 30" row spacings to very narrow 10" drilled spacings. The 'Chiwapa' was planted on 30' x 50' plots t a rate of 30 lbs/ac.

Two millet planting dates were 6/21/05 and 7/15/05. A scheduled planting for the first of July was cancelled due to 3 of 5 locations not receiving any rainfall since the first planting date.

**Table 2. Percent stand, seed yield, seed quality and available seed on the ground of ‘Chiwapa’ Japanese millet at Quitman county site, 15 December 2005.**

Planting Date	County	Percent Stand	Yield	Seed Fill <sup>1/</sup>	Available Seed on the Ground <sup>2/</sup>
June 21	Grenada	<1%	0		5
	Tallahatchie	<5%	0		5
	Quitman	N/A	N/A		
	PMC	N/A	N/A		
	Humphreys	N/A	N/A		
	Sharkey	N/A	N/A		
July 15	Grenada	<1%	0		5
	Tallahatchie	63%	0		4
	Quitman	N/A	N/A		
	PMC	N/A	N/A		
	Humphreys	N/A	N/A		
	Sharkey	N/A	N/A		

In 2005, yield samples did not contain any seed that had matured. The crop was planted on time but drought conditions slowed establishment; also crop was hit by an early frost before seed filled out.

Fields in Quitman, Humphreys, and Sharkey were disked by landowners prior to evaluation due to dry conditions.

## 2006 Chiwapa/Soybean Study Info:

- 1.25 lbs = 30 lbs/acre on a 30X50 plot
- PLS = 1.5 lbs/plot
- 3 sites with near same soybean planting dates
- Millet planting dates are scheduled for June 16, June 30, July 14

### Tallahatchie County site info:

- 4.7 maturity group beans planted on 4/7/06
- Pioneer 94B73 is soybean variety / 19 inch row spacing
- Soil type is alligator clay
- Average plant height on 6/16 is 20-24 inches, canopy almost closed

### Coahoma County site info:

- 4.6 maturity group beans planted on 4/6/06
- Dekalb 4651 is variety / drilled row spacing (solid)
- Average plant height on 6/16 is 14-18 inches, near complete canopy

### Washington County site info:

- 4.4 maturity group beans planted on 4/7/06
- Monsanto 4403 is variety / row spacing is 15 inch twin drilled rows
- Average plant height on 6/16 is 14-18 inches, not canopied

## Summary:

The July 19 planting produced the highest percent stands and the highest seed yield, but seed quality was lower than for the June 16 planting. We had expected that percent stand and seed yield should have been higher for the July 19 planting because the soybeans would have reached peak production in late July and begun to senesce, allowing the millet to begin to make growth. Although seed availability was good in December the seed quality, as measured by percent fill, was poor. Poor seed fill was attributed to low rainfall which was encountered in late summer and early fall. We also saw this at the PMC, where a foundation seed field of 'Chiwapa' Japanese millet did not produce as much filled seed as was harvested in the previous year. This was due to extremely low rainfall at the PMC (no measurable rainfall in September) that negatively impacted seed set.

The lowest percent stand was observed in the August 13 and June 16 plantings (Table 1). Observations made in July indicated that a significant amount of seed germinated in the June 16 plots, but canopy cover from the soybean reduced the sunlight available for the millet to make substantial growth. Seedlings observed beneath the soybean canopy in July were extremely weak. It is interesting to note that millet growing in the tractor tracks was vigorous and more productive, which supports the theory that sunlight was the limiting factor effecting June planted millet growth into Group IV soybeans.

Although the measured seed yield was lower than expected, a significant amount of seeds that shattered from the plant would be considered available for migratory birds or for reseeded. Seed quality in June 16 plots was fair.

Poor results in the August 13 planting were due to the lack of rainfall at planting time. A limited amount of seed germinated but, because rainfall was sparse, seedlings did not survive.

In 2005, a drought after planting and an early frost prevented the development of measurable seed yield. In 2006 drought once again had an impact, causing the loss of two sites. The remaining site showed the best seed yield from the earliest planting date, but showed the greatest stand from the later planting date.

From the results to date, it appears that the practice of planting a waterfowl food source into Group IV soybeans has merit, it appears that 'Chiwapa' may not be the best plant material. Therefore, future trials may include browntop millet and a shorter growing season variety of Japanese millet.

## Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus* L.) Variety and Herbicide Test

Study Number: MSPMC-P-0118-CP  
Duration: 2004-2006  
Cooperator: Kevin Nelms, Area Biologist, NRCS, Greenwood, MS

### Introduction:

The mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura* Linnaeus) is the most hunted game bird in the Southeast and very popular in Mississippi. Landowners commonly plant fields specifically to attract doves for harvest. Sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus* L.) are frequently planted for dove.

Wildlife biologists frequently recommend planting “peredovick” variety of sunflowers based on a 1980 U.S. Fish and Wildlife study of bird food preferences. Dove and many other species of wild birds showed a preference for black oil-type sunflowers. Peredovick was the best known variety of black oil sunflowers for use in the Southeast. However, the oil crop growth of sunflower in the U.S. has resulted in increased varieties available for southern use. These varieties need to be tested for use in Mississippi and compared to peredovick performance.

Doves are not strong scratchers and rarely perch on seed heads to feed. Therefore, seed must be available on relatively clean, open ground. Many sunflower fields become unattractive to dove due to weed pressure. Historically, very few herbicides were labeled for use on sunflowers and weed control recommendations were not complete. Again, due to increased cropping of sunflowers, new herbicides have recently been labeled for use. In addition, genetically modified herbicide resistant varieties of sunflower are now being marketed. Herbicide efficacy needs to be evaluated due to large price differences and unfamiliarity of new herbicide performances in Mississippi. The study will result in development of a sunflower dove field system best suited to Mississippi. This system can then be confidently recommended to landowners by NRCS personnel.

### Materials and Methods:

Variety plots will be 10' by 40' with 3 replicates in a randomized complete block. Eight to twelve varieties will be selected for the study based on possible southern performance. Plots will be planted at a rate of 2 seeds per foot on 30" rows using a no-till planter. Plots will be planted in mid-April. Plots will be fertilized with 50 lbs/acre N at planting and 50 lbs/acre N at 3-4 weeks after germination.

Remainder of test fields will be planted using the same equipment, rates, and dates. Herbicide evaluations will be randomly arranged in this field and marked using flags and GPS. Herbicide treatments will be applied using a boom sprayer. Treatments will consist of an untreated control, preemergence of metolachlor (Dual Magnum®) at 1.33 pts./acre and sulfentrazone (Spartan®) at 4 oz./acre and postemergence of clethodim (Select® 2 EC) at 8 oz./acre, preemergence of metolachlor (Dual Magnum®) at 1.33 pts./acre and postemergence of imazamox (Beyond®) at 5 oz./acre. When needed, treatments will be incorporated by rainfall.

### **2005 Results:**

In 2005, four black oil sunflower varieties and two herbicide treatments were evaluated.

Three replicates of peredovick, Triumph FTB (“For the Birds”), Triumph 665, and Triumph FTB Clearfield were compared. Peredovick averaged 457 lbs/ac, Triumph FTB averaged 1259 lbs/ac, Triumph 665 averaged 958 lbs/ac, and Triumph FTB Clearfield averaged 882 lbs/ac.

The two herbicide treatments compared were label recommended rates of Dual Magnum® and Beyond® for Clearfield variety, and Dual Magnum®, Spartan® 4F, and Select® 2EC. Dual®/Beyond® averaged 22 percent bare ground and Dual®/Spartan®/Select® averaged 88 percent bare ground.