

PLANT MATERIALS TODAY

A newsletter from the USDA-NRCS Montana-Wyoming Plant Materials Program for those Interested in Plants and Conservation



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For more information on Plant Materials or for electronic access to this and other documents, access our web sites, [Montana NRCS](http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov) at <http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov> or [National Plant Materials Program](http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/mtpmc/) <http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/mtpmc/>. Direct inquiries to USDA-NRCS, Plant Materials Center, 98 South River Road, Bridger, MT 59014, phone: 406-662-3579, FAX: 855-510-7028. All photos by BPMC or Montana NRCS staff, or USDA or NRCS file photos, unless otherwise noted.

🌿 Important Updates 🌿

Plant Materials Specialist Retires

With the retirement of Dr. Jim Jacobs, Plant Materials Specialist, on April 3, 2016 (see below article), some temporary adjustments to the Montana-Wyoming Plant Materials Program and Center operations will be instituted until the Specialist position is filled.

One change for field staff for 2016 relates to the annual seed collection list. For 2016, wildland collections of any species are on hold. If you feel you have an extraordinary opportunity to collect some previously targeted or exceptional conservation species, please call the Center. If you're in the middle-of-nowhere, and are unlikely to return, go ahead and make the collection and send it to us, we wouldn't want to miss a rare opportunity.

At this point in time, there are no planned Field Plantings approved for Montana for FY2016. The Center will move forward with all Field Plantings approved at the Wyoming Plant Materials Committee meeting for FY2016 and FY2017.

Have a plant materials question that would normally be addressed by the Plant Materials Specialist? Until further notice, please call the Plant Materials Center for assistance and direction.



Jim Jacobs (far left) at Berry Field Planting

Dr. Jim Jacobs, invasive species coordinator and Montana-Wyoming Plant Materials Specialist for NRCS, retired in April after 10 years of federal service. Jim came to Montana NRCS in 2006 from Montana State University where he was a weed scientist.

Jim brought a host of talents and efforts to the Montana-Wyoming Plant Materials Program including experimental design and analysis, technical document review, invasive weed management strategies, and a strong field planting program. He often began addressing a research effort or conservation problem by

saying, “now let’s consider what a producer would do”.

In addition to his research and technical prowess, Jim will also be missed for his laid back attitude and good humor. A favorite expression of his was, “there are three kinds of math people, those who can, and those who can’t”. And we know Jim will be sailing on skis down some avalanche chute somewhere, especially now that there is less math to consider! Best wishes “Dr. J”.

Plant Notes

Rough Bulletgall Wasp on Bur Oak

Once again, calls are coming in from across Montana and Wyoming describing the appearance of round, woody nodules along stems of bur oak trees (see below). These galls are caused by female rough bulletgall wasps,



Galls on bur oak

which oviposit eggs in the terminal buds in the fall, and lay eggs again in the green stems of

current season twigs in late spring and early summer.

Rough bulletgall can cause some injury and damage to susceptible trees, but often the most serious effect is a reduced rate of growth, and that with only the most heavily infested trees. Individual trees demonstrate a wide range of resistance to the wasp, with unaffected trees often growing next to heavily infested trees.

It might seem logical to remove infested twigs in order to reduce the number of wasps, but that is generally not advised as this pest is host to parasitic insects that will also be reduced. Since insecticidal control is largely considered ineffective, the best course of action is to keep infested trees healthy by providing adequate water and nutrition.

Joe Scianna - BPMC Manager/Horticulturist

New Tools

New Plot Combine and Mower

Anyone familiar with agricultural operations understands the importance of good farm machinery. As staffs become smaller, the importance of adequate and dependable equipment becomes all the more apparent.

Thanks to funding from our national office, the BPMC was able to upgrade two important pieces of equipment this year. The first is a new plot combine (see below). Although our older model works well, the new unit has numerous time-saving features, greater seed storage capacity, several improved seed processing designs, and will allow the operator to work in a safer, healthier, and more comfortable environment.



New Bridger Plant Materials Center plot combine

Another important acquisition this year is a 15-foot rotary mower (see below). This new unit mows an area three times greater than the old



New Bridger Plant Materials Center mower

mower, saving enormous amounts of staff time. It's especially useful for mowing cover crop fields, helping return organic matter to the soil, and enhancing soil health. The new mower has "flexible wings" that allow access to narrow spaces, better mowing of edges, and easy transport.

🌿 Technician's Tip 🌿

Finding That Row!

There are several techniques we use at the Center to suppress weeds during initial stand

establishment. One of those techniques is to mechanically cultivate with a high-center, one- or two-row cultivation tractor. This piece of equipment allows us to cultivate very closely to the establishing row, and is useful for situations where herbicides are not practical or would be detrimental to small seedlings.

Unfortunately, finding seedling rows in fields with significant weeds and other competition can be difficult. One option is to sow a fast growing species with our target crop to help us find the row. One practice that works well is to sow different life forms, such as an annual broadleaf, such as radish, with a grass crop, or conversely, a grass with a broadleaf crop (see below). In the former case, the faster growing radish allows



Barley (dead) planted with Gardner 4-wing saltbush

us to find the row and can be removed later by mowing or use of a broadleaf selective herbicide. The only trick is to make sure the non-target crop does not produce seed and further contaminate the field.

Darren Zentner and Ross Oyler - BPMC Biological Technicians

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