

## Natural Resources Conservation Service

## 2024 Progress Report of Activities E. "Kika" de la Garza Plant Materials Center Kingsville, Texas

The following are highlights of the E. "Kika" de la Garza Plant Materials Center (STPMC) activities for 2024. Please contact the PMC for more detailed information.

### Projects at the STPMC



*Figure 1: Gulf cordgrass advanced evaluation plot*

In 2024, we replanted the second half of our foundation and breeder seed fields. This will help meet the current demand for our conservation plant releases from our Texas seed producers.

Collection of the fourth and final year of field data and seed harvest from the Maximillian sunflower evaluation nursery was completed in 2024. We will collect samples for a genetics study in early spring 2025. A seed germination test of the December 2024 seed harvest will be conducted in summer of 2025.

We also completed the fourth and final year of field evaluations of the gulf cordgrass advanced evaluation planting. We will complete the seed germination trials in 2025 and summarize the results of this project.

### Staffing Changes

Hayden Taylor, our former study leader, has left NRCS to work for our partners at Texas Natives Seeds. Joseph Sigmon will be joining us in January 2025 as our new study leader.

#### Plant Materials Center Staff

Shelly Chambers  
PMC Manager

Rebecca Aguilar  
Biological Technician

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Kristy Oates  
Texas State Conservationist

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Charles Kneuper  
State Resource Conservationist

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<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/plant-materials/stpmc>

## Training Opportunities

STPMC staff gave presentations on the PMC program and pollinator habitat to a variety of groups in 2024, both professional and local interest.

In October 2024, the STPMC, Texas Natives Seeds, and NRCS Zone 3 Rangeland Management Specialist, Taylor Schroeder, co-hosted a training on the use of native seed. We included discussion on conservation native seed releases, developing a native seed mix, site preparation, how to utilize native seed in USDA programs, and a tour of the PMC grounds. Thanks to feedback from our first participant group, we plan to customize the training a bit more and host it once a year. We will rotate the location to make attendance easier throughout Zone 3.

## Seed Collections Needed

The STPMC is seeking South Texas seed collections of frostweed (*Verbesina microptera*) and red sage (*Salvia coccinea*). We plan to start our evaluations of frostweed soon and the red sage in spring 2026. Please contact the PMC if you would like more information.



Figure 2: Red sage



Figure 3: Bee on Maximilian sunflower

## About the PMC

The E. “Kika” de la Garza Plant Materials Center is a 76-acre facility established to provide cost-effective vegetative solutions for soil and water conservation problems. This means identifying plants and developing techniques for successful conservation use. It also means assisting in the commercial development of these plants and promoting their use in natural resource conservation and other environmental programs.

The PMC was established in 1981. It is one of 25 centers located throughout the United States. The PMC is operated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in cooperation with Texas A&M University-Kingsville, the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute (CKWRI), South Texas Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, and the Gulf Coast Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts. The E. “Kika” de la Garza PMC serves approximately 27 million acres of the southern portion of Texas.



### ***Program Emphasis***

The mission of the E. “Kika” de la Garza PMC is to develop and transfer plant science technology to solve natural resource problems in the South Texas area. Plant testing and plant selection, as well as the development of new plant science technologies, are the primary products of our program. The PMC conducts plantings and studies at the Center and off-Center with cooperating partners. The PMC works with NRCS Field Offices, Conservation Districts, federal and state agencies, and private landowners.

Our current program emphasis at the PMC is in the following areas:

- Rangeland Habitat Restoration and Enhancement
- Pollinator Habitat
- Coastal Shoreline Stabilization
- Cover Crops and Soil Health



***Figure 4: Black swallowtail butterfly on Rio Grande clammyweed***

### ***Presentations & Trainings for FY 2024***

- Shelly Chambers gave a presentation on Pollinator Habitat to the Nueces County Master Naturalists in November of 2023.
- Rebecca Aguilar manned a booth describing Career Opportunities in NRCS at a Texas A&M University-Kingsville career day in November 2023.
- Shelly Chambers gave a presentation on the pollinator studies at the PMC in December 2023.
- Shelly Chambers presented a talk on Pollinator Habitat Basics at the SWCD Field Day held in Johnson City in April 2024.
- Shelly Chambers gave a presentation Seed Collection to the Edna, Texas Master Gardeners in May 2024.
- The Native Plant Society of Texas South Texas Chapter and Hayden Taylor provided NRCS pollinator brochures the Butterfly Tent at the Rockport Hummerbird Festival in September 2024.
- Shelly Chambers gave a status update of the E. “Kika” de la Garza PMC program and activities in 2023 & 2024 at the SWCD regional board meeting in September 2024.

### ***Publications for FY 2024***

- Chambers, S. and H. Taylor. 2024. Year 2023 Progress Report of Activities.

Current Availability of South Texas Ecotype Releases			
Common Name	Scientific Name	Available From	Available
Lavaca Germplasm Canada Wildrye	<i>Elymus canadensis</i>	Turner, Douglass King, and Bamert	Now
Falfurrias Germplasm Big Sacaton	<i>Sporobolus wrightii</i>	Douglass King	Limited
Kinney Germplasm False Rhodes Grass	<i>Trichloris crinita</i>	Douglass King	Limited
Catarina Blend Bristlegrass	<i>Setaria leucopila</i> & <i>Setaria vulpiseta</i>	Douglass King, Bamert, and Turner	Now
Mariah Germplasm Hooded Windmillgrass	<i>Chloris cucullata</i>	Douglass King and Bamert	Now
Welder Germplasm Shortspike Windmillgrass	<i>Chloris subdolichostachya</i>	Douglass King and Bamert	Now
Dilley Germplasm Slender Grama	<i>Bouteloua repens</i>	Douglass King	Limited
Chaparral Germplasm Hairy Grama	<i>Bouteloua hirsuta</i>	Douglass King	Limited
Atascosa Germplasm Texas Grama	<i>Bouteloua rigidiseta</i>	Douglass King	Limited
La Salle Germplasm Arizona Cottontop	<i>Digitaria californica</i>	Douglass King	Now
Zapata Germplasm Rio Grande Clammyweed	<i>Polanisia dodecandra</i> ssp. <i>riograndensis</i>	Douglass King	Now
Maverick Germplasm Pink Pappusgrass	<i>Pappophorum bicolor</i>	Douglass King	Now
Webb Germplasm Whiplash Pappusgrass	<i>Pappophorum vaginatum</i>	Douglass King	Now
Hidalgo Germplasm Multiflower False Rhodes Grass	<i>Trichloris pluriflora</i>	Douglass King	Limited
Oso Germplasm Hall's Panicum	<i>Panicum hallii</i> var. <i>filipes</i>	Douglass King and Bamert	Limited
South Texas Germplasm Sideoats Grama	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i> var. <i>caespitosa</i>	Douglass King	Now
Rio Grande Germplasm Prairie Acacia	<i>Acacia angustissima</i> var. <i>hirta</i>	Douglass King	Limited
Venado Germplasm Awnless Bushsunflower	<i>Simsia calva</i>	Douglass King	Limited
Balli Germplasm Prostrate Bundleflower	<i>Desmanthus virgatus</i> var. <i>depressus</i>	Douglass King	Limited
Goliad Germplasm Orange Zexmenia	<i>Wedelia texana</i>	Douglass King	Limited
Duval Germplasm Red Lovegrass	<i>Eragrostis secundiflora</i> ssp. <i>oxylepis</i>	Douglass King	Now
Ramadero Germplasm Spike Lovegrass	<i>Eragrostis spicata</i>	Douglass King	Limited
Nueces Germplasm Sand Dropseed	<i>Sporobolus cryptandrus</i>	Douglass King	Limited
Carrizo Blend Little Bluestem	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> var. <i>scoparium</i>	Douglass King	Limited
Fuego Germplasm Indian Blanket	<i>Gaillardia pulchella</i>	Douglass King	Now
Loma Germplasm Purple Threeawn	<i>Aristida purpurea</i>	Douglass King and Bamert	Now, limited

Seed companies abbreviated above are Douglass King Seed Company, Bamert Seed Company, and Turner Seed Company.

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