

Natural Resources Conservation Service

2025 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 2025. Please contact the PMC for more detailed information.

Projects at STPMC



Figure 1. Seedlings for New Breeder Seed Rows

In 2025, we added or replaced six plots of our Foundation and breeder seed fields.

Seed germination tests for the Maximillian sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*) evaluation and the gulf cordgrass (*Spartina spartinae*) advanced evaluation were completed in 2025. We also collected samples from the Maximillian plot for a genetics study. Results of these tests will help us determine if we will pursue either species to a conservation seed release.

A new initial evaluation study of Texas populations of alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*) was started by our partners at Texas Natives Seeds at multiple locations. We are participating in this study and have installed an evaluation plot here at the PMC and collected the first year of data.

Training Opportunities

STPMC staff gave presentations on the PMC program and pollinator habitat to local Master Naturalist groups and at a Kingsville butterfly festival in 2025.

In October 2024, 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 some great feedback from our first participant group, which

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consisted mainly of NRCS Field Office staff, we plan to customize the training a bit more and host it again.

Staffing Changes

Joseph Sigmon joined STPMC staff in January of 2025 as our new study leader. Joseph graduated from Broward College with a bachelor's degree in environmental science and later went on to complete his master's degree in agronomy at the University of Florida. During his time as a graduate student, Joseph studied propagation and establishment of native Florida plants for use in everglades restoration. While earning his master's degree, he was employed at the United States Department of Agriculture Invasive Plant Research Laboratory where he worked on biological control of Brazilian peppertree and Chinese tallow.

He was born and raised in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Despite being raised in an urban environment he developed a love for the natural world. He is an avid birder and photographer.

Joseph plans to use his background in restoration to aid in conservation of land in south Texas. He has been an excellent addition to the staff at STPMC.



Figure 2. Joseph Sigmon, new study leader at STPMC

Seed Collections Needed

STPMC is seeking South Texas seed collections of frostweed (*Verbesina microptera*) and red sage (*Salvia coccinea*). We plan to start our evaluations of frostweed in spring 2026 and the red sage in spring 2027.

Our partners at Texas Native Seed are looking for collections of blue mistflower/ Jack in the bush (*Chromolaena odorata*), tumble lovegrass (*Eragrostis sessilispica*), gummy lovegrass (*Eragrostis curtispedicellata*), vine mesquite (*Panicum obtusum*), Texas cup grass (*Eriochloa sericea*) and mealy bluesage (*Salvia farinacea*).

Please contact the PMC if you would like more information.

About the PMC

STPMC 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.

Serving approximately 27 million acres of the southern portion of Texas, STPMC was established in 1981 and 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. .

Program Emphasis

The mission of STPMC 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

Presentations & Trainings for FY 2025

- Everything Native Seed - Training & PMC tour co-hosted with Texas Native Seeds & NRCS Zone 3 Range Conservationist. Training provided on the PMC Program, Texas Native Seeds, how to develop a native seed mix, site prep, types of releases, and using native seed in USDA programs.
- PMC progress presentation to the South Texas Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the spring.
- PMC tour given to the South Texas Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the fall.
- Pollinator habitat presentation – 1 hour training on pollinator habitat and pollinator brochures/ factsheets to the Nueces & Kleberg County Master Naturalists.
- Pollinator Game - Presented the pollinator game and pollinator brochures/ factsheets at the Kingsville Butterfly Blitz.

Publications for FY 2025

- Chambers, S. 2025. Year 2024 Progress Report of Activities.
- VanWallendael, A., Wijewardana, C., Bonnette, J., Vormwald, L., Fritschi, F.B., Boe, A., Chambers, S., Mitchell, R.B., Rouquette, F.M., Jr, Wu, Y., Fay, P.A., Jastrow, J.D., Lovell, J.T., Juenger, T.E. and Lowry, D.B. 2025. Local adaptation of both plant and pathogen: an arms-race compromise in switchgrass rust. *New Phytologist*, 2025. 15p.

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 vulpisetata</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 rigidisetata</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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