

Native Seed Sources for use in Game Bird Food Plots

Anthony D. Falk, Keith A. Pawelek, Forrest S. Smith, Matthew Schnupp, Robert Sanders, Aaron Cantu, Terry Hanzak, and Rudy Gonzalez

Planting and cultivating seed bearing crops in order to draw in game birds for harvest is a common land management practice used in South Texas. It has been observed that game birds often seek out native food sources over the high input crops, particularly when crop attractants are grown under marginal conditions. Native plants may be a better option for many food plot efforts on arid rangelands in South Texas due to their ability to produce a quality seed crop under marginal growing conditions.

In summer 2014, *South Texas Natives* seeded 6 different native species documented to be consumed by doves and quail in 6 different food plots across South Texas. In this preliminary experiment, all 6 plantings sites were in previously established food plots. Half the sites will be irrigated. Species established included Oso Germplasm Halls panicum, Venado Germplasm awnless bushsunflower, Zapata Germplasm Rio Grande clammyweed, Balli Germplasm prostrate bundleflower, Rio Grande Germplasm prairie acacia, and Catarina Blend bristlegrass. Each species was planted in a monoculture plot within larger food plots in order to identify if any of these native plant species are preferred by game birds in this setting.

The vegetation in each plot will be measured this fall in order to determine which species performed best at each location. Along with vegetation measurements we will be collecting the crops from game birds harvested from the plots to determine if the birds are actually feeding on the seeded species, and if so, what preference for each species they exhibit.

Cooperative funding provided by Caesar Kleberg Partners Program