

## ***East Texas Natives Project Collections and Evaluations***

*Tyler C. Wayland, Robert A. Shadow, Jacob Sparger, Keith A. Pawelek, and Forrest S. Smith*

Native plant restoration is in high demand in the East Texas region. This is due to land use changes, increased highway and pipeline construction, energy production and transfer, and efforts to offset habitat fragmentation caused by urbanization and development. However, in East Texas, there are few regionally adapted or ecotypic native seed sources available commercially to meet these demands. To solve this problem, *Texas Native Seeds* expanded into the East Texas region in February 2018.

We have made over 370 native seed collections of 46 species across 57 East Texas counties. Seed collections were made from along county roads, private and public lands, and National Forests. Indiangrass and silver bluestem were selected as the first species to be evaluated for seed source development in the region. In May 2019, we established the project's first evaluation plots at the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service East Texas Plant Materials Center in Nacogdoches and at Daisy Farms near Paris. These sites will be used to evaluate adaptation and performance of native populations of these species collected from East Texas for selection of suitable ecotypes for commercial seed production.

The *East Texas Natives* Project should help improve supply of locally adapted native seed of a large variety of native plants. Over time, this will result in the availability of native seed mixes for use in a wide range of applications.

*Cooperative funding provided by Ellen Temple, Texas Department of Transportation, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, Joan and Rufus Duncan, Amanda Haralson and Thomas Livesay, Susan Temple, the Pineywoods Foundation, Trans Canada Pipeline Company, and the East Texas Community Foundation.*