

East Texas Natives Project—Collection and Evaluation of East Texas Native Plants

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

The revegetation of oil and gas pipelines, transmission line right-of-ways, and highway roadsides are all examples of large-scale native plant restoration opportunities in East Texas. One of the largest challenges facing such efforts is the lack of commercially available, locally-adapted native plant seed sources. We are working to solve this problem by collecting, developing, and commercializing regionally-adapted native plant seed for restoration projects across the East Texas region.

The *East Texas Natives Project* has now made over 530 native plant seed collections from 59 counties in East Texas. In 2020, we established two additional evaluation sites: Boggy Slough Conservation Area in Trinity County and Riverby Ranch in Fannin County. The project now maintains four unique evaluation sites, which provide the opportunity for evaluations in all major ecoregions of East Texas. These sites are used to evaluate and select the best performing plant populations of each species to be released for large scale commercial production. Native plants under evaluation include Indiangrass, silver bluestem, purpletop tridens, and rattlesnake master. The *East Texas Natives Project* collection and evaluation process will facilitate the development of widely adapted native plant seed sources for the pineywoods, oak woods and prairies, and blackland prairie ecosystems of East Texas.

Cooperative funding provided by Ellen Temple, Joan and Rufus Duncan, Amanda Haralson and Thomas Livesay, Jim Brown, Susan Temple, the Winston 8 Ranch, Mitchell Foundation, Pineywoods Foundation, East Texas Community Foundation, Texas Department of Transportation, USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service, and the U.S. Forest Service.