



## CELEBRATE CONSERVATION!

Soil & Water Stewardship Week is being held in Texas April 30 through May 7, 2006. The theme from the National Association of Conservation Districts is **Water Wise**. We need to share the good reasons why we celebrate!

In almost every way, our lives in the United States are richer and fuller than at any other time in history. People live longer now and enjoy better health. We can eat an incredible variety of fresh foods any time of the year. Overall air and water quality continues to improve. Our forest resources grow abundant and healthy. People have the ability to produce, travel, learn, and play more than anyone would have thought possible a generation ago.

Many of these improvements in our lives come directly from good conservation practices. Along with our people, our nation's greatest treasures are our abundant and excellent soil and water resources. Good conservation helps make sure we have the essentials of good food and clean water. With our basic needs fulfilled, we can spend our time making better lives for ourselves, our families, and others with whom we share the world.

As we celebrate conservation, we should pause to consider and thank the many people who work every day to protect, manage, and improve our natural resources. We applaud the pioneers of conservation and encourage those who continue to explore its frontiers today.

We marvel at the almost incredible growth of knowledge about our world that allows us to conserve resources wisely. But we should still be humble at how much we have to learn. We still face many resource challenges, and the dynamic nature of our world guarantees that new problems will arise.

As we learn and grow and adapt, we give thanks for this great life. And as we review the many things for which we have to be thankful, let us remember to **CELEBRATE CONSERVATION!**





## ***LOOKING FOR GRASS OR WILDFLOWER SEEDS? CALL US!***

Each Soil & Water Conservation District is a self-supporting, non-profit organization. Our purpose is to improve the support we give to our landowners. For example, every year the Gillespie Co. SWCD sponsors an awards banquet for students with winning essays and posters on conservation. We also sponsor young students from this county to attend a summer Youth Range Workshop.

We have partnered with Turner Seed Company to sell grass, wildflower, and wildlife seed. You can call or come by our office to order from a large selection of grass, wildflower, and wildlife seeds in bulk quantities. We place the order for you. Your seed is shipped to us the day or the day after the order is placed. You'll be called when we receive the seed and it's ready for pick-up at our office. You must pay for the seed when you pick it up.

A few of the many grass seeds available are Kleingrass, Wilman Lovegrass, WW-B Dahl, Switchgrass, Indiangrass, Sideoats gamma, Little Bluestem, and Big Bluestem. Illinois (Sabine) Bundleflower, Engelmann daisy, and Partridge Pea are a few of the

forbs offered. Texas Perennial Wildlife Mix and Tank Dam Mixture are two of six perennial grass and forb mixtures available. Over 30 kinds of individual wildflower seeds are available. Two mixtures—Texas Native Spring Mixture and Starburst Spring Mixture each have 15 or 16 types of wildflower seeds. Many wildlife seeds are offered, too, including two mixtures – Spring Deer Mix and Quail & Turkey Mix.

This seed program allows the districts to provide the customer good service, and can save the landowner time and money. Give us a call at 830-997-3349 ext. 3 for more information on Seeding Recommendations of species and seeding rates. We're glad to help, and we can send you a list of available seeds and prices.

**Note:** This article was originally written for the Spring 2006 issue. As of 2009, along with Turner Seed Company, we have several sources for various types of seed. We'll work with you to locate the seed you're looking for. Just ask.



## **GRASS MAKES ITS OWN FOOD**

*For Growth, Forage, Good Land Use, and For Soil Conservation*

**Grasses**, like all green plants, live and grow on food manufactured primarily in their own green leaves. Ranges, pastures, lawns, or other grass crops can flourish and conserve soil only as the individual plants have an opportunity to make food for their own growth.

Plant food is manufactured in the leaves, and not, as many people suppose, drawn from the roots or the soil. The plant gets the "raw materials" to make food from the soil and the air. Because the plant's "food factory" is above the ground, grazing, mowing, or clipping promptly stops production to the extent that green foliage is removed.

**A Perennial Grass** stores food in its roots after it has made the season's main growth. It uses these reserves to live on while the plant is dormant, to make the first growth next season, and to start new growth after its green leaves and stems are closely grazed or cut. The ability of perennial grasses to recover quickly after grazing or mowing makes these plants especially valuable for forage production and soil conservation. This same ability often deceives the user of grass into thinking he can repeatedly remove any amount of leaves without injury to the plant.

What happens to grass plants that repeatedly lose their green leaves during the growing season? Since no "food factories" are left to receive and combine the raw materials from the soil and air, the plant keeps drawing on food stored in the roots to grow new leaves. It robs the storehouse until the supply is exhausted and then dies of starvation.

Research shows that many grasses will not reach their maximum vigor and growth when more than half their leaf surface is removed by frequent grazing or mowing.

Repeated removal of green foliage causes a corresponding reduction in the plant root system. Top growth that is kept small cannot feed a large root system; neither can a stunted root system supply enough raw materials to support a large growth of stems and leaves.

A grass cover that is weak does not make efficient use of soil moisture and nutrients. As a result it does not provide the maximum amount of livestock feed. And it is not able to protect the soil from erosion by wind or water.

A dense cover of grass protects the soil from the battering, splashing action of rain. The leaves break up the raindrops and allow more water to soak into the soil, thus preventing erosion, conserving moisture for plant growth, and restoring underground water supplies. The higher and denser the grass, the better it shades the soil and keeps it cool. This reduces loss of water by evaporation and enables grass to grow better in hot weather.

For every pound of growth above ground, most grasses produce a pound or more of roots. Some of the better forage grasses send their roots down 10 to 15 feet. Some lawn grasses may penetrate as deep as 3 to 4 feet.

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