

# Society for Ecological Restoration Texas Chapter



## Restoration Field Notes

December, 2013

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## President's Letter

TXSER has had a busy and successful year. We have updated our website considerably and are sending out regular newsletters again.

The November joint TXSER-TRA conference in Junction was a great success. If you missed it, you can find the abstracts and presentations by clicking here: [Abstracts & Presentations](#). We are already working on next year's conference, which will be held in Alpine. We've invited the Southwest SER Chapter to join us at the conference. If you are interested in helping to plan the conference or have ideas for field trip locations, please contact Colin Shackelford at: [colin.shackelford@tamuk.edu](mailto:colin.shackelford@tamuk.edu) or Kate Crosthwaite at: [Katherine.Crosthwaite@hdrinc.com](mailto:Katherine.Crosthwaite@hdrinc.com).

Other on-going projects include working on obtaining our 501(c)3 status in the State of Texas.

We are looking forward to another great year in 2014. If you have ideas for TXSER activities, please contact me at: [creemts@tnc.org](mailto:creemts@tnc.org) or Gwen Thomas at: [gonthomas\\_eco@fastmail.fm](mailto:gonthomas_eco@fastmail.fm).

Charlotte Reemts  
President

## Student Association News

It's been an exciting Fall for the Texas A&M University's Society for Ecological Restoration Student Association (TAMU SER)!

Marissa Sipocz

Coastal Texas Rep.  
Mary Edwards

Chapter Coordinator  
Gwen Thomas

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**We are heading west  
for 2014!**

**19th Annual TXSER  
Conference is planned  
for Alpine, Texas**

**Details to come.**

A group of members were able to attend the Texas SER/Texas Riparian Association Joint Conference in early November at which graduate student member, Deseri Nally, received the 2013 Graduate Student Poster Award for her research on the federally endangered Navasota Ladies'-Tresses (*Spiranthes parksii*).



**Members of TAMU SER in Bastrop, on the road to the Loblolly pine planting site.**

Since last fall, TAMU SER has grown over 700 loblolly pine seedlings in support of the Bastrop Fire Relief Effort. On Saturday, November 23rd, TAMU SER members braved the cold and rain to plant 125 of these seedlings. More plantings will be scheduled in the next few months.



James Tracy was the winner of our "Eat your Enemy" invasive species potluck dish contest. He created a spectacular "Tamarisk Casserole" complete with Tamarisk beetles on the river banks.

Congratulations to all!

## Seeds for Restoration

**By: Eric Grahmann**

**Quail Biologist & Restoration Ecologist**

**Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, based in San Antonio, TX**

In restoration projects, seeds are seeds right? Wrong. A seed is not a seed, is not seed, when it comes to success in restoration projects. As a restoration ecologist that has had more than his share of failures, I have learned the hard way about what does and does not work when restoration projects require reseeding with herbaceous plants.

All restoration projects are different. The variability in climate, soils, preexisting vegetation, past land use, etc. make it nearly impossible to implement blanket recommendations across all sites. However, there are a few steps you can take when seeding, no matter the project, that will help you become more successful in your restoration plantings. Below, I list 3 important tips to maximize your chances for success.

1. Plant native plants only. This point may come as a "duh" to many of you. However, the importance of using plants that are non invasive and provide benefit to wild creatures cannot be over stated. Literally thousands of non-native, invasive plant species have been planted on restoration projects with the intention of slowing erosion, increasing water infiltration into soil, and providing forage for wildlife and livestock among others. But, the ecological value of such non-native plants can be quickly outweighed with negative

consequences if they escape areas where planted and invade invaluable native plant communities. This recommendation does not include non-native, non-invasive crops such as cereal rye and some millet species as these species can provide valuable cover until more suitable, long-term native seed mixes can be planted. Just be sure to do your homework before planting non-native cover crops.

2. Use the correct ecotype of native species for your project. An ecotype is a distinct form or race of a species that occupies a particular habitat. Along the same lines of using native species, it cannot be stressed enough that the restoration ecologist must use the correct ecotype of the native plant desired. Take for example the extremely popular native grass, little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*). Little bluestem occupies natural grasslands extending from about the continental divide to the Atlantic coast and from Canada to Mexico. This native grass is also readily available from numerous seed sources across the country. However, although little bluestem (or other native plant species for that matter) may be native to the site to be restored, there may not be a native ecotype of this species available on the seed market. It is important when purchasing seed to ask for the collection site from which a particular variety originated. This is most easily done by purchasing certified seed. When planting within the Edwards Plateau for example, be sure to plant natives from which the seed source originated from that ecoregion. To demonstrate this point, in a field trial recently conducted by the South Texas Natives Program, multiple ecotypes of plants native to south and central Texas were planted and evaluated in several different sites. To no ones surprise, native plants with ecotypes originating closer to their origins did best. Foreign ecotypes of plants native to south and central Texas performed poorly or did not establish at all. Plants from different regions have different growth and reproductive schedules in addition to different soil and microclimatic adaptations. To sum it up, a little bluestem seed source from Kansas will not perform well when planted in the Edwards Plateau compared to seed from little bluestem native to the Edwards Plateau.



**Little Bluestem**  
(*Schizachyrium scoparium*)



**Native Seed Mix**

3. Use the most diverse seed mix possible. The only thing constant in restoration plantings is variation. Between soils, climate, previous land use, etc., the restoration ecologist likely will never see the exact same conditions between plantings within their lifetime. Therefore, it is extremely important to create a seed mix that hedges for the unknown. Be sure to include a diverse mix of early and late successional plants in addition to a variety of grasses and forbs. Each plant species has a specific set of conditions in which it performs best and it is impossible to accurately predict what circumstances

Mother Nature has in store for the future. In addition, variable soil structure and nutrients and microtopographical variation can have a profound impact on the establishment of species across the planted area. For example, on our numerous experimental plantings across south Texas using the same mixes, we have had various species do better than others on every site. In addition, certain plant species

inevitably do best within their own particular niches. Texas grama (*Bouteloua rigidiseta*) tends to do best in slightly nutrient poor patches than four-flower trichloris (*Trichloris pluriflora*) which tends to do best in more nutrient rich patches across the restoration interface. Planting multi-species blends ensures most niches will be filled by vegetation when the restoration is said and done.

Above, I have listed 3 standard tips that can help maximize restoration success for ecological function and integrity. I wish you success in your future plantings.

For further restoration tips and assistance, Eric Grahmann, Ph.D., can be reached at [eric.grahmann@tamuk.edu](mailto:eric.grahmann@tamuk.edu) or 361-522-9868.

The Society for Ecological Restoration, Texas Chapter promotes ecological restoration as a means of sustaining the diversity of life on Earth and re-establishing an ecologically healthy relationship between nature and culture.

**Become a member today!**

**[Click Here to Join Us!](#)**

Join the Texas Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration. Chapter members receive valuable benefits including:

- the opportunity to network with restoration practitioners and enthusiasts;
- discounts to our Annual Conference, an opportunity to share and learn;
- invitations to attend volunteer workdays around the state; and,
- monthly updates and quarterly newsletters with articles and notices about regional events that allow you to connect to the local restoration community.

Chapter membership fees of \$15 support chapter administration. The TXSER Board of Directors consists of volunteers who share a passion for furthering ecological restoration in Texas.

Joining SER links you with a global restoration network. SER member benefits include:

- RESTORE bi-weekly e-bulletin;
- SERNews quarterly newsletter;
- discounts on journal publications;
- discounts to SER World Conferences;
- discounts on SER Career Center;
- access to a searchable, online member directory, and,
- promotional opportunities through the SER Calendar of Events, Restoration Project Showcase, and Restoration Marketplace.

To become a member visit: **[www.ser.org/membership](http://www.ser.org/membership)**

Be sure to click the Texas Chapter as your Chapter Affiliate. We look forward to having you join us!

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