



# Native Plant Program

## Project Status

**Project Year:** 2009 to present      **Status:** Ongoing

**Category:** Restoration

**Location:** Nicholls State University Farm

**Project Partners:** Nicholls State University, Shell Oil Company, MOSAIC, LLC

## Background and Problem Addressed:

The fastest disappearing landmass on earth is occurring in the Barataria and Terrebonne estuaries. This rapid coastal land loss is indiscriminate in the habitats and landforms being washed away. Often overlooked are the remnant chenier ridges and maritime forests, the “high land”, in an otherwise vast expanse of wetlands. However, these ridges and maritime forests are critically important habitat to the millions of Neotropical migratory birds that pass through each spring and fall along the Mississippi Flyway. Without these ridges and maritime forests and the food and protection their trees afford, far fewer birds could be supported along this critically important migration route.

Restoring and reforesting ridges and maritime forests for the migrating birds as well as serving to protect the surrounding wetlands from the effects of storm surge has become an increasing priority. BTNEP has been at the forefront of ridge restoration since the late 1990's, collaborating with partners on the creation of the Fourchon Maritime Forest Ridge and Marsh Restoration and with bird experts in the selection of a suite of native woody species beneficial to the migrating birds. BTNEP collects native seed from local areas prone to periodic salt water intrusions or maritime influence with the expectation that the seeds and trees will exhibit a higher tolerance to the saline soils and conditions found in the restoration areas the seed has been selected for. As a result of the Fourchon ridge restoration project and the ever expansion of our Volunteer Program, BTNEP's Coastal Restoration Native Planting Program has expanded to meet these needs and to increase our restoration planting footprint within the region.



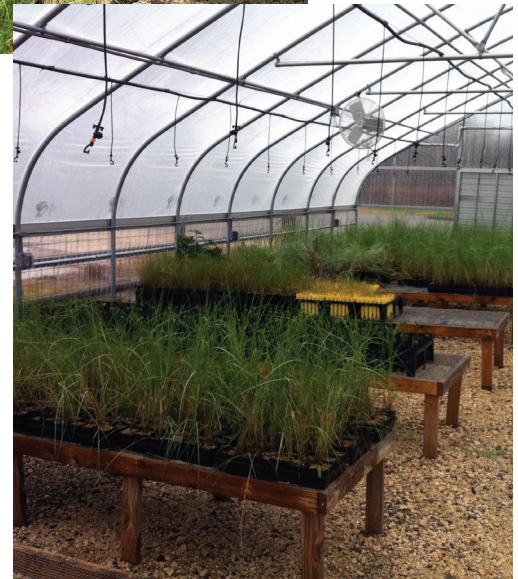


## Project Description:

Originally sharing an existing shadehouse with Nicholls State University, BTNEP began building its own shadehouse to grow out native seedlings in 2010 and expanded it again in 2014 to the current size of 4,800 sq.ft. Also, in 2014, BTNEP added a 1,500 sq. ft. greenhouse to our facility to increase our species diversity of both woody and herbaceous plants. The greenhouse provides protection for the woody seedlings from infrequent winter cold snaps that can kill the susceptible young plants such as the black mangrove. Black mangroves provide habitat benefiting fish and avian species, such as rookeries for the brown pelican in our coastal marshes and barrier islands, but require two growing seasons to get to maturity for use in vegetative restoration projects. The addition of the greenhouse has made adding black mangroves to our suite of restoration plants possible.

The greenhouse has allowed the program to maximize our expansion into herbaceous plants utilized for shoreline stabilization and dune creation and that provide habitat for birds, fish and fauna. Dune building species such as railroad vine and beach morning-glory, which would normally die in our pots in the shadehouse during winter, now overwinter in the greenhouse and are available for planting at the first sign of spring.

Finally, the Native Plant Program provides an educational opportunity for the many volunteers and college interns that participate at the farm. These volunteers come from all over the country with an interest to help save the Louisiana coast. The volunteers provide the program with the manpower to pot the thousands of plants that the program utilizes in coastal restoration plantings each year and they leave with an understanding, not only of the plants, but of the plight of Louisiana's land loss and what needs to be done to save this economic, environmental, and culturally important area.



## CCMP Action Items Addressed:

Preservation and Restoration of Barrier Islands  
(Ecological Management #5)

Shoreline Stabilization and Induced Deposition  
(Ecological Management #6)

Protection of Habitat for Migratory and Resident Birds  
(Ecological Management #15)

Reduction of Impacts from Exotic Vegetation  
(Ecological Management #16)

Citizen Involvement Programs and Activities (Sustained  
Recognition #3)