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Contact: Jennifer Peterson, Publications & Communications Coordinator, NC Botanical Garden, 919-962-9457; jennifer.peterson@unc.edu; <http://ncbg.unc.edu>

Seeds of Success grow in the eastern United States

Chapel Hill, NC - This spring, seed collection and banking efforts along the eastern seaboard received a boost with a \$3.5 million funding award. Through a partnership called Seeds of Success, the North Carolina Botanical Garden (NCBG), New England Wild Flower Society (NEWFS), and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Seed Bank (MARSB) will collect, bank and provide native, locally-adapted seed to coastal restoration projects funded through the Department's Sandy Supplemental Mitigation Fund (SSMF).

Seeds of Success (SOS) is the national native seed collection program led by the Bureau of Land Management. SOS's mission is to collect wildland native seed for research, development, germplasm conservation, and ecosystem restoration. The long-term conservation outcome of the SOS program is to support BLM's Native Plant Materials Development Program, whose mission is to increase the quality and quantity of native plant materials available for restoring and supporting resilient ecosystems.

Over the course of two years, the three institutions will hire a total 28 interns from the Chicago Botanic Garden's Conservation and Land Management Internship Program that will make 1,400 seed collections. Fourteen interns were recently trained at a three-day course at NCBG and three coordinators were hired to lead each the collection teams.

The SOS East Project will target 30-50 foundation species found in the habitats most impacted by Hurricane Sandy, including sub-tidal habitats, beaches and dunes, wetlands and marshes, near-coastal freshwater habitats, coastal forests, and inland rivers and streams. Each team will record the location, habitat and associated species details and collect voucher specimens for each collection. One copy of each herbarium voucher collected will be stored at the United States National Herbarium at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History as a reference for the scientific community. All collections will be sent to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Cape May Plant Materials Center to be cleaned, weighed and tested for purity.

The collected germplasm will be held in internationally-recognized seed banks at each of the participating institutions until the restoration projects are poised to use these building blocks in their projects. Long-term conservation storage will be provided by the USDA Agricultural Research Service's National Plant Germplasm System. Both short term and long term conservation storage is necessary to decrease species' vulnerability.

In addition to making seed collections, building partnerships among federal land managing agencies and private, state and local land owners will be necessary to continue the efforts of establishing a sustainable native plant materials development program in the Eastern United States. Unlike the West, where on average 47 percent of all land is federally owned, the average in the East is only four percent. This fact alone necessitates a program that is inclusive of both federal and non-federal partners if management of seed resources is to be effective. Only a large scale collaborative program of this caliber will allow for the future restoration of resilient plant habitats throughout the East.

The partners hope that they can build on SOS East and develop an ecoregional native plant materials development program which provides ongoing restoration projects with immediate access to the locally adapted, genetically diverse raw material needed to re-vegetate and facilitate resilience to coastal habitats.

The NCBG, part of the University of North Carolina, is a 1,000-acre assemblage of display gardens and natural areas. It is nationally known as a center for the study, display, interpretation, and conservation of plants. Through its educational, recreational, therapeutic horticulture, and research programs, it extends opportunities for connection with nature to people of all abilities and backgrounds. The Garden is open seven days a week and admission is free. Find out more at <http://ncbg.unc.edu>.

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