

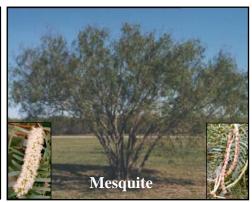
Plant Fact Sheet



COASTAL WATERBIRD NESTING HABITAT ENHANCEMENT













Contributed by: USDA NRCS Kika de la Garza Plant Materials Center

Purpose

Dredge spoil islands and other coastal sites are in need of native plants and planting techniques to establish vegetation. These locations are important waterbird nesting habitat along the Texas Gulf Coast. Often these sites are either bare-ground or are vegetated primarily with short herbaceous grasses and forbs. While many water birds (such as terns) prefer to nest on bareground, others (such as herons and egrets) prefer to nest in trees or tall shrubs.

An establishment experiment on Sundown Island, Port Lavaca, Texas yielded six small tree

and shrub species useful for coastal habitat enhancement. These species are huisache (Acacia farnesiana), retama (Parkinsonia aculeata), mesquite (Prosopis glandulosa), fiddlewood (Citharexylum berlandieri), colima (Zanthoxylum fagara), and granjeno (Celtis pallida). These plants have shown to establish successfully and remain over a two-year period at the study site. Each plant's extended range should be considered before being used in another location.

Species	Scientific Name	Family	Mature Height	Wildlife Uses
Huisache	Acacia farnesiana	Leguminosae	6 meters	Bird nesting site
Retama	Parkinsonia aculeata	Leguminosae	10 meters	Seeds eaten by quail & bird nesting site
Mesquite	Prosopis glandulosa	Leguminosae	10 meters	Bird nesting site
Fiddlewood	Citharexylum berlandieri	Verbenaceae	6 meters	Bird nesting site
Colima	Zanthoxylum fagara	Rutaceae	9 meters	Bird nesting site
Granjeno	Celtis pallida	Ulmaceae	3 meters	Fruits eaten by birds and mammals & bird nesting site

Establishment

Obtain plants or seeds that originated as close to the location where they will be used as possible. This will aid in increasing survival, as these plants will be more adapted to the local climate and growing conditions. Use as many different species as available to increase diversity and to avoid success being dependent on just one species.

Allow plants to grow to a height of 9 to 12 inches before transplanting. Fall is the best time to transplant trees in Texas as the rate of transpiration is less and plants will have time to establish a good root system before facing a Texas summer. Plant trees and shrubs one meter apart.

In locations with adequate seasonal rainfall, short tree shelters or weedmat do not appear to increase survival. However, on more xeric sites small tree shelters will help to improve both survival and plant vigor. Using weed mat in addition to a tree shelter did not show to increase survival.

Management

This planting practice requires little additional management. If the soil is low in fertility, a

slow release fertilizer tablet can be added. Tree shelters can be removed in two years, or they can be allowed to degrade in place. Depending on survival rates, it may be necessary to thin the plants as they get larger. Begin thinning out plants as their canopies begin to grow together, which with most of these species will take several years.

Planting Plot on Sundown Island, TX



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