

Station Facts

Sandhills Research Station was established in 1940 on a 100-acre tract in Eagle Springs and moved in 1951 to its present 517-acre site in the Windblow community of Montgomery County. The station was created to address the needs of peach growers of the sandhills area and as such was first named the Peach Station. SRS provides the platform necessary for conducting agricultural research developed by scientists at N.C. State University and other institutions. The station provides the land, labor, equipment and management to support the research and the staff provide the care necessary for the research projects.

Infrastructure

There are presently 13 buildings including an office, superintendent's dwelling, equipment maintenance shop, chemical and fertilizer storage buildings, equipment storage sheds and packhouse. A new turf equipment storage building is the most recent addition. The station has a highly developed irrigation system that can supply supplemental irrigation to every field of the station by way of underground lines and hydrants. Two ponds supply the irrigation water. Irrigation machines include two large lateral move systems and four hard hose travelers. Twelve trucks, 14 tractors, a combine and a backhoe are used to support the research operations.

Events

Turfgrass Field Day is held every other year to promote turfgrass management.

Small Fruits Field Day is held every other year with a focus on research related to strawberries, brambles and blueberries.

Peach Field Day is held as needed, usually every 2-3 years.

SRS also hosts numerous other tour groups and informal training throughout the year.

Research Programs

Small Fruits More than 20 varieties of peaches have been developed at the station. In addition to developing new varieties, researchers also study ways to control diseases, weeds and insects. Cultural management practices like pruning, thinning, irrigation and fertility are also evaluated.



Blackberries and raspberries are evaluated at SRS for their productivity and adaptation to the local area. In addition to developing new varieties, blackberries are also used to evaluate new uses of pesticides through the IR-4 specialty crops program. Strawberries are grown at SRS for a number of different projects. Strawberry stock plants are produced as Foundation and Registered parents for the strawberry certification program. Blueberry cultivars are developed with traits that consumers and growers want. Good tasting, high yielding varieties are developed

through research at SRS. Presently, several new and very promising selections of peaches are being evaluated for future release. Other fruit crops such as blueberries, brambles and strawberries are being studied and developed as prospects for production as alternatives to more traditional crops in the sandhills such as tobacco. A day-neutral strawberry is being developed which will potentially provide fruit for growers in this area from spring until late fall. Blackberry and raspberry research is poised for significant expansion at SRS to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding industry in North Carolina.

Field Crops Soybean, peanut, corn and small grain studies have increased at SRS in the past few years. Uniform, deep sandy soils of Sandhills Research Station are ideal for evaluating drought resistance in many crops. Corn research focuses on the development of more disease resistant, higher yielding, widely adapted corn hybrids. Cotton is grown at the station to screen breeding lines for hardiness and drought tolerance. Scientists are optimistic that new varieties of soybeans will soon be released which will increase soybean yields by virtue of improved drought tolerance. This could have significant economic impact for soybean producers in North Carolina and across the nation.

Ornamentals Butterfly Bush and RedBud are two species of particular interest in the relatively new ornamental research program at SRS. Improved and novel varieties of these landscape plants as well as weeping and red leaf form of the redbud tree are being developed at SRS. Small, compact butterfly bushes of various colors are also being developed.

Turfgrass Turfgrass research plots are maintained at SRS to mimic golf courses, athletic fields and home lawns. Researchers study the environmental impacts of turf; control of pests such as insects, weeds and diseases, as well as cultural evaluations like traffic tolerance and mowing height effect on turf quality. Furthermore, the impact of heat and drought stress on weed competition and turf vigor is evaluated. Variety trials are used to determine adaptability of different cultivars to our local climate and soils.



Community Partnership

The Sandhills Research Station, with its deep, sandy soil, provides research scientists unique opportunities to investigate plant-water relationships, plant nutrient movements and other factors that provide cost and labor efficient ways to produce fruits, vegetables, feed grains, ornamentals and high quality turfgrass. The soils of the station are typical of the Sandhills region and are a good medium for crop research due to drainage and uniformity properties.

Research programs at SRS include plant breeding for new variety development and improvement, cultural management practices of crops, adaptability of crops to our local environment and soils as well as the management of weeds, diseases, insects and other agricultural deterrents. Field experiments and research help growers improve quality and increase the yield of crops suitable for production in the sandhills region.

The Sandhills Research Station serves as a central location for training events and workshops since the station is strategically located for Cooperative Extension personnel and growers from Moore, Richmond and Montgomery County.



Research Stations Division

Working together for one cause

Mission

To manage crop and livestock facilities that serve as a platform for agriculture research to make farming more efficient, productive, and profitable, while maintaining a sound environment and providing consumers with safe and affordable products.

Partnership

Agriculture research in North Carolina dates back to 1877, when state legislation established the N.C. Department of Agriculture along with “Experiment Stations” as a division of the department. Since that time, the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ Research Stations Division, in partnership with N.C. State University, has established 18 statewide locations. Each facility has unique climate and soil conditions, giving researchers a living laboratory in which to investigate a variety of regional crops, forestry concerns, livestock, poultry, and aquaculture. The Division supports these studies by providing land, water, equipment, buildings, and staff who work around the clock to help build a stronger foundation for the future of agriculture.

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Sandhills

RESEARCH STATION

Montgomery County



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