

SHORELINES – September 2002
As presented to the Island Review Magazine.

INTERVIEW WITH A COASTAL HORTICULTURALIST

This month, you may begin seeing a bright yellow pamphlet at town halls, hotels, restaurants, and other businesses containing some helpful information regarding the importance of dunes and dune plants. This pamphlet represents a cooperative effort among the Beach Commission, local reforestation groups, and municipalities. I interviewed David Nash for additional insight to the field of coastal horticulture. David is a Coastal Management and Commercial Horticultural Agent with the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service, and has received national recognition for his work in Brunswick and New Hanover Counties. Our interview went as follows.

Rudi (R) – Hi David. So why are dunes so important?

David (D) – From a practical standpoint, they provide a tremendous amount of infrastructure protection during a storm. That is what most people see. But there is a whole ecosystem that is part of the dune environment, which supports plant and animal life. We tend to take this for granted.

R – Well, what can we do to protect the dunes?

D – We need to be thinking about preservation and conservation, and basically this means protecting the plant material that stabilizes the dunes. We need to think about how we access the beach, not to walk on the plants. When we build houses and clear lots, we need to think about rescuing and relocating these plants to other areas of the beach that needs vegetation. And of course, we always want to be planting new vegetation when new sand is placed on the beach.

R – On that note, what kind of plants are the most vigorous and offer the best dune stabilization?

D – Well, the frontal dune is what a lot of people call the pioneer zone. I would recommend four native species for your area. That would be Sea Oats, Bitter Panicum, Seashore Elder, and Saltmeadow Cordgrass.

R – And all of these are native?

D – Yes, all of these plants are native to Bogue Banks, and it is also important that you get indigenous plant material. Meaning that the material has been propagated from seeds or cuttings of plants that originated from the Bogue Banks area.

R – Is there a preferable time of year to plant these species?

D – The best planting dates for these species, in general, are from May 1st to late September.

R – Why is that?

D – Because they are warm season, perennial (active throughout the year) plants, and they need to be planted when they will not be susceptible to frost. The only exception is Bitter Panicum. If planting the rhizome (rootlike, horizontal stem), it should be planted in March. I should mention that American Beachgrass is a winter perennial that is native from Cape Hatteras northward, which should be planted between November and March. Although it is fairly adapted to Bogue Banks, these plants tend to thin out after 3 – 5 years. However, I would encourage the use of indigenous plants if it all possible.

R – This is great information. Any closing comments?

D – Just to encourage people to take care of the dune system, learn more about the dune environment, and maybe enroll in one the Cooperative Extension's Master Dune Conservation Programs (laughter).

SHORELINES – September 2002
As presented to the Island Review Magazine.

R – A shameless plug, but of course great advice. Thank you for taking time to talk to us about this important issue.

As a quick side note, the Shore Protection Office's webpage now includes an updated monitoring page that can be viewed at, <http://co.carteret.nc.us/shoreprotection/monitoring.htm>.

Beach Commission Update

At a special interim meeting on June 28th, the Beach Commission approved bill language regarding the proposed "Sand Management Plan" Water Resources Development Act provision. The Commission agreed on report language that will be included if the bill language is approved by Congress. Some of the Atlantic Beach contingency has raised issues with the proposed provision and as such, the Sand Management Plan continued to be a main focal point at the regular July meeting as well. However, the focus of the meeting quickly shifted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers access and parking requirements for the Section 933 and 50-year Shore Protection Projects. The Corps recently revealed that only 4.15 miles of Bogue Banks would qualify for federal participation, thereby causing a potential and dramatic shift in the financial burden for both of these projects to be placed upon the local sponsors (County and municipalities). Pursuant to initial conversations regarding this topic, the Commission decided to retain retired Corps engineer Tom Jarrett for assistance in preparing a course of action and interpreting pertinent Corps regulations.