



## Analyzing the Potential of Biomass Crops

Take a ride on the Hyland People Movers this September beyond the traditional crop plots at Canada's Outdoor Farm Show (COFS) and you will discover a new unique crop that is stirring up lots of interest with Ontario farmers.

COFS has teamed up with the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) to create a new field plot of energy crops. Located in the Southwest Demo Field and accessible from the main site via the shuttling Hyland People Movers, this biomass demonstration is part of the OSCIA's Field-Scale Agricultural Biomass Research and Development Project. It's not your typical crop plot but it is definitely worth a visit.

"The idea is to spark interest," says Nick Betts, Outreach Coordinator with OSCIA who leads the project. "Farmers like to see things growing to know that they actually exist."

The OSCIA project aims to study the agronomic and economic feasibility of biomass crops in Ontario. The COFS field demonstration consists of approximately 4 acres of different types of switchgrass and miscanthus planted for comparison. Both miscanthus and switchgrass are perennial grasses known as biomass energy crops and processed as pellets for combustion or as ethanol. Recognizing the expertise of Ontario's early-adopters of biomass, COFS and OSCIA leaned heavily on the help of Ontario farmers Scott Abercrombie and John Malecki to oversee the planting of the miscanthus and switchgrass plots respectively.

The COFS plot is one of 25 fields in the OSCIA's biomass project funded in conjunction with the Agricultural Adaptation Council. The other fields stretch across the province from Rainy River to Ottawa, from Niagara to Essex County. Unlike the traditional quarter-acre plots used in previous Ontario biomass research, most of the current trials are from 10 to 30 acres in size and many of the farmers are trying these new energy crops for the first time. According to Betts, these producers are ground-breaking innovators.

The biomass project at Canada's Outdoor Farm Show will run until 2013 allowing attendees to see the progression of the crop over a three year period. During COFS, attendees will be able to walk the fields and see equipment used for planting, harvesting and processing.

Also on display will be some of the end-products currently being introduced to consumers, such as containers made from switchgrass and used plastic wraps from boat storage and hay bales.

In addition to the plots in the Southwest Demo Field, more biomass demonstrations can be viewed in the Canadian Energy Expo beside the Ducks Unlimited Wetland Farm Pond. These smaller plots will showcase different grass mixes of miscanthus and switchgrass, with experts available to answer questions and explain options.

The OSCIA biomass demonstration plots are located in the Southwest Demo Field next to the corn stalk tillage and sheepdog demonstrations. Shuttles will pick up attendees on both the west and east sides of the Show to take attendees out to the Southwest Demo Field.

Canada's Outdoor Farm Show will be held September 13, 14 & 15, 2011 at Canada's Outdoor Park in Woodstock, Ontario. For more information, visit [www.OutdoorFarmShow.com](http://www.OutdoorFarmShow.com)