



United States Department of Agriculture
 Natural Resources Conservation Service
 Plant Materials Program

Red River Natural Germplasm Prairie Cordgrass

Spartina pectinata

A Conservation Plant Release by USDA NRCS Plant Materials Center, Bismarck, North Dakota



Red River Natural Germplasm prairie cordgrass (*Spartina pectinata* Bosc ex Link) is a selected class natural germplasm released in 1998 in cooperation with the Agricultural Experiment Stations in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota.

Description

Prairie cordgrass is native to most of the United States. It is a robust, warm-season grass that averages 5-7 feet in height. It is commonly named ripgut because of the sharp, serrated leaf blade edges. Red River Natural Germplasm prairie cordgrass has both coarse and fine leaved plants. The uniform, dark green color changes to yellow-gold in the fall and winter. The stiff stems and abundant leaves provide excellent upright wildlife habitat. Forage quality is fair, if harvested early in the growing season. Prairie cordgrass spreads quite rapidly by vigorous, scaly rhizomes. Seeds are flat and paperlike with barbed awns.



USDA-NRCS PLANTS
 Database / Hitchcock, A.S. (rev.
 A. Chase). 1950. *Manual of the
 grasses of the United States.*
 USDA Miscellaneous
 Publication No. 200.
 Washington, DC.

Characteristics

- Genetic diversity
- Vigorous growth
- Good seed production
- Leafiness
- Strong rhizome spread

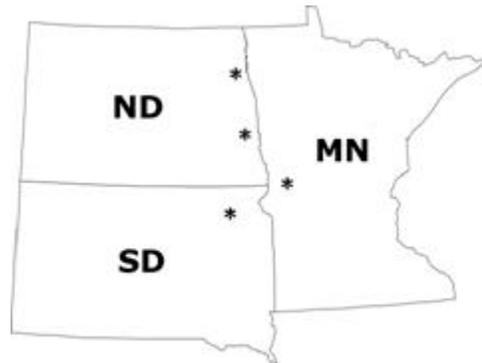
Conservation Uses

- Wetland restoration and enhancement
- Streambank stabilization
- Herbaceous wind barriers
- Filter strips
- Riparian buffers
- Wildlife habitat
- Prairie landscaping
- Early season forage

Source

Regional collection from:

- Grant County, Minnesota
- Cass County, North Dakota
- Grand Forks County, North Dakota
- Day County, South Dakota



Area of Adaptation and Use

Wet prairies, wet meadow zone in a wetland, drainage areas, marshes, and potholes are preferred sites of prairie cordgrass. It will grow on a variety of soil types and is moderately tolerant of salt and alkaline conditions. It is often planted as vegetative pieces for wetland restoration and streambank stabilization.

Establishment

Once established, stands have excellent longevity, and will become more dense with time. Bareroot rhizome pieces can be dug and planted in the spring to establish windstrip barriers or stabilize streambanks. When establishing via seed, bearded seed is preferred. Prairie cordgrass has 183,000 seeds/lb. The solid seeding rate when using a drill is 30-35 seeds/ft² (7-8 pure live seed (PLS) lb/acre). If broadcast seeding a small area, increase seeding rate to greater than 30 seeds/ft². In a mixture, prairie cordgrass should not exceed 20 percent of the mix. A late spring seeding is preferred (May 10-June 20 in

North Dakota). The recommended seeding depth is ½ to ¾ inch.

Seed Production

- Wide row spacing is recommended for seed production fields (7-15 ft).
- Seed can be harvested after the first frost. Seed ripens in September and does not shatter until October. There is some dormancy in freshly harvested seed.
- Average seed yield is 30-75 PLS lb/acre.
- Seed viability is greatly reduced with extended storage of 3-4 years.



Before streambank stabilization



After streambank stabilization

Availability

Red River Natural Germplasm prairie cordgrass is a selected class natural germplasm release originating from vegetative collections in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

For conservation use: Generation 2 seed, equivalent to certified seed, is available from various commercial vendors.

For seed or plant increase: Generation 1 seed, equivalent to foundation seed, is available for seed increase from the USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center, Bismarck, North Dakota.

For more information, contact:
USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center
3308 University Drive
Bismarck, ND 58504
Phone: (701) 250-4330
Fax: (701) 250-4334
<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>

Citation

Release Brochure for Red River Natural Germplasm prairie cordgrass (*Spartina pectinata*). USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Plant Materials Center, Bismarck, ND 58504. Published September 2002, revised August 2012.

For additional information about this and other plants, please contact your local USDA Service Center, NRCS field office (www.nrcs.usda.gov) or Conservation District and visit the PLANTS Web site (www.plants.usda.gov) or the Plant Materials Program Web site (www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov).

Helping People Help The Land

USDA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER