



Cape May Plant Materials Center

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Plant Materials Program
Technology Update

Proudly Serving the Conservation Plant Needs of the Mid-Atlantic Region from Massachusetts to North Carolina.

PLANTING GUIDE

Bare – Rooted Saltmeadow cordgrass

For

Tidal Shoreline and Dune Stabilization

Saltmeadow Cordgrass (*Spartina patens*) is usually planted in combination with others species to stabilize tidal shorelines and back dune areas. It can also be established alone in special plantings, especially to mitigate wetlands or to supplement vegetation adjacent to wetlands. This guide describes saltmeadow cordgrass and provides instruction for establishing planting with bare-root stock.

Description

Saltmeadow cordgrass is a fine-textured perennial grass that grows to a height of two feet. Most strains produce extensive slender rhizomes with aggressive spreading tendency. The species is a strong sod former and will grow through new sand deposits up to 4 inches deep.

Saltmeadow cordgrass usually grows between normal high tide and the area above any tidal influence. It tolerates a wide range of salinity and soil texture, from coarse sands to silty-clay sediments. The plants thrive in organic and peat marshes.

Generally, more rapid and uniform stands develop from potted than bare-root plants. However, bare-root plants can be used if potted plants are not available. Field grown plants are recommended for planting stock since plants dug from natural stands are usually unsatisfactory.

‘**Avalon**’ is a superior cultivar of saltmeadow cordgrass. Avalon is recommended wherever cordgrass is desired.

Planting Stock

The Avalon planting stock should be healthy, freshly dug plants. The stems or culms should possess potent nodes or new shoots. Because cordgrass tends to form a dense sod, the stems and rhizomes may intertwine.

A plantable group of culms is called a planting unit. One planting unit should consist of 3 to 5 culms. Each culm must possess at least one potent node or new shoot, hence one growing point. However, a culm may possess several potential growing points. Three culms may be a planting unit if each possesses two or more growing points. Otherwise, use five culms per planting unit. Generally, culms with attached rhizomes can be planted but carry no extra value.

Individual culms originating from a common point need not be separated. The culms representing a planting unit should be pressed together before planting. The reference point should be the top-most node or the base of the upper new shoot. This should be planted two inches deep

Planting

The planting process begins with preparing a 'hole' with a dibble bar or similar tool. This hole should be sufficiently deep to accept the planting unit at the desired planting depth (4-6 inches) without bending or constricting the culms. Drop 1 to 2 ounces of a 12-18-6 controlled release fertilizer into the hole and cover it slightly with soil before placing the plant in the hole.

Compact the soil around the plant either with the foot or by making a second slit with the tool and compressing the soil toward the plant. When using the foot to compact soil, use caution to prevent damage to the nodes.

Planting spacing should be 2 feet by 2 to 3 feet. Use the closer spacing for more severe sites. Plant on a staggered spacing between rows of American beachgrass starting at the crest of the dune continuing landward. Other planting and maintenance techniques are the same as for potted plants. Optimum planting dates for the Maryland to Massachusetts coast are March 1 through June 15. Earlier planting can be done for more southerly locations.

Maintenance

1. Restrict traffic on planted area.
2. Apply 3-5 lbs of 16-8-8 fertilizer per 100 square feet each year shortly after regrowth has begun.
3. Remove debris after every storm.
4. Routinely, replant any areas where the plants are lost.

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