

‘Flageo’ Marshhay Cordgrass
Spartina patens* (Ait.) Muhl*USDA-NRCS Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center**
Americus, Georgia**Fort Valley State University**
Fort Valley, Georgia**SPECIES:** *Spartina patens* (Ait.) Muhl**PLANT SYMBOL:** SPPA**RELEASE NAME:** ‘Flageo’

GENERAL INFORMATION: ‘Flageo’ was the first plant ever to be released jointly by the NRCS and Fort Valley State University. Marshhay cordgrass is a native coastal grass naturally occurring along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts of the United States. It makes primary growth during the warm season and some growth all year. It produces most of its blooms by October. Mature plants remain green until late fall after heavy frosts. Marshhay cordgrass frequently grows in almost pure stands. It reproduces and expands from long rhizomes, although it can give the appearance of a bunch grass. Marshhay cordgrass occurs in brackish to saline marshes. It also can occupy sandy areas on the marsh side of barrier islands. In the Southeastern United States it is often found on low sand dunes and interdunal swale areas of coastal lands. ‘Flageo’ is a superior selection of marshhay cordgrass selected from a large collection of marshhay cordgrass ecotypes assembled from indigenous sites in Texas to North Carolina and evaluated by the USDA-NRCS.

DESCRIPTION: Marshhay cordgrass is a native perennial warm season grass with erect stems, mostly less than 40 inches tall. Leaves are less than 1/8 inch wide and are sometimes flat but usually roll inward from the edges. It spreads by long slender rhizomes. Seed heads are composed of two or more compressed spikes attached at nearly right angles to the culm. Marshhay cordgrass is especially salt tolerant.

USE: ‘Flageo’ is primarily used along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts of the Southeastern United States. It can be used to help stabilize low coastal sand dunes, wet interdune swales and certain high salt marsh areas. The use of Flageo could provide excellent plant material for restoration of coastal areas devastated by Gulf and Atlantic hurricanes. In addition to “standard” uses in coastal areas this highly adapted native grass can be utilized on inland sites. Plant material specialists have successively stabilized highly erosive areas on deep inland sands of South Carolina. Plant material specialists have also used ‘Flageo’ to stabilize shorelines of recreational lakes and commercial catfish operations in Alabama and Georgia. Plantings in the Mobile, Alabama area have stabilized public areas to enhance resident and tourist usage. ‘Flageo’, like other marshhay cordgrass, could be important forage on adapted sites in coastal areas. It may provide forage for cattle during the winter months. Forage quality is improved if burned every second year between September and February when water level is above soil surface to prevent damage to roots during fire. Areas burned and grazed in winter should not be grazed for at least 120 days the following summer. Flageo also provides food and cover for small mammals and waterfowl.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS: ‘Flageo’ was collected in Manteo, North Carolina and shows no invasive characteristics as determined by the Environmental Evaluation Report completed by the USDA-NRCS Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center, Americus, Georgia

ESTABLISHMENT: Plant rhizomes 4 to 6 inches deep into moist soil or deeper in sandy substrates.

PLANTING RATE: Utilize potted or bare rooted stock with 5 to 10 stems each. Place plants 12 to 24 inches apart, depending on severity of site.

PLANTING DATE: Plant vegetative material in late winter to early spring in Alabama, Georgia and the Carolinas, and at the beginning of the rainy season in Florida.

FERTILIZATION: On critical area plantings, place one ounce of slow release fertilizer per plant at planting, or apply 200 to 300 pounds of 10-10-10 per acre when the plants begin actively growing. Apply 200 to 300 pounds of 10-10-10 per acre annually in June until full stand are achieved.

DISEASE AND INSECTS: ‘Flageo’ has no special resistance to disease beyond that commonly found within the species.

MAINTENANCE: Minimize foot traffic and remove debris from planting site. Cross-over sites may be required to reduce pedestrian damage. Some sites may require irrigation for proper establishment and growth.

WHERE TO GET HELP: For more information contact Mike Owsley at the USDA-NRCS Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center, Americus, Georgia (mike.owsley@ga.usda.gov or call phone 229-924-4499.

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