



West Bay Germplasm Gulf cordgrass *Spartina spartinae*

West Bay Germplasm gulf cordgrass [*Spartina spartinae* (Trin.) Merr. ex A.S. Hitchc] was released in 2020 by the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center (PMC), Galliano, Louisiana as a selected class release.

Description

West Bay Germplasm is a stout, native, perennial grass that grows in dense clumps (Fig. 1). Leaves are long and slender and have a spine-like tip. The inflorescence, or seedhead, is a long, slender panicle with tight, erect spikes. Plants are in dense tufts with stems approximately 30 to 50 inches long. Leaf blades are narrow with sharp tips. Inflorescence is 6 to 7 inches long. It flowers in spring, summer and sometimes in fall. Gulf cordgrass is moderately saline tolerant (0-18 ppt.) and performs well in mesic areas. It can also grow in areas occasionally submerged in water but frequently occurs on upper banks above sea level.



Figure 1. Photo of West Bay Germplasm Gulf cordgrass field at the Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center

Source

West Bay Germplasm gulf cordgrass was collected from a native stand in Brazoria County, Texas.

Conservation Uses

West Bay Germplasm is an excellent plant for coastal restoration and shoreline stabilization. West Bay Germplasm is recommended for the areas of Gulf Coast Marshes, Gulf Coast Prairies and Gulf Coast Saline Prairies for NRCS conservation practices such as conservation cover, critical area planting and wildlife habitat planting for a variety of common shorebirds and waterfowl.

Area of Adaptation and Use

West Bay Germplasm is recommended for use in coastal areas of the north central Gulf of Mexico basin. It performed well in field and demonstration plantings on soils ranging from coarse sands to clays, mucks, and aquent mixes and tolerated fluctuating water levels, but additional field plantings are needed to verify its full range of adaptation.

Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings

West Bay Germplasm is usually propagated by vegetative stem divisions from container grown or in field plant stock. Depending on the energy effecting the planting site, either containerized (high impact sites) or bare root (mild impact sites) plants can be utilized. Bare root plugs are generally limited to planting sites that are exposed to little or no wave energy. Containerized and bare root material should contain 5 to 8 healthy stems per planting unit. Since most marsh sites are irregular and difficult to access, hand planting is normally performed, using spades, dibbles or planting bars. Transplant propagules into moist soil approximately 3 to 6 inches deep. If site conditions are ideal, planting can be carried out with a tractor dawn transplanter. Recommended plant spacing should be between 36 to 60 inches apart but closer spacing can be used for denser, quicker cover. Gulf cordgrass will tolerate fluctuating water levels of salinity, but prolonged and elevated levels of salinity, poor water circulation, and high-water temperatures may affect plant health and vigor.

Ecological Considerations

Gulf cordgrass is a naturally occurring species throughout the Gulf South and the release of West Bay Germplasm for public use would not constitute introduction of a foreign species to local ecosystems. West Bay Germplasm was selected from native stands of gulf cordgrass and has had no genetic modification. It is believed that any negative impact to other native species would be minimal to nonexistent.

Seed and Plant Production

Establish West Bay Germplasm from container grown or in field plant stock. Several container sizes are used to commercially grow gulf cordgrass. Trade-gallon (3/4 gallon) containers have a higher per unit cost compared to smaller containers. Smaller containerized (e.g. 4-inch containers and cone pots) are the easiest type to grow and transport gulf cordgrass. Bare root plugs are the most economical of commercially field grown plant stock available. Plants propagated under nursery conditions may need irrigating if the site is not moist year-round to encourage good plant growth and spread. It is not necessary to fertilize once the plant is established; however, a slow release fertilizer enhances plant survival at transplanting. The PMC has used the following fertilizer products for greenhouse production and conservation plantings based on recommended manufacture rates for Agriform® 20-10-5 at one 21gram tablet / trade one-gallon container or field transplants, or Osmocote® Plus 15-9-12 at 20 grams / trade one-gallon container or field transplants.

Availability

For plant increase: West Bay Germplasm gulf cordgrass vegetative stock is available for commercial nursery production from the USDA, NRCS, PMC, Galliano, Louisiana. To ensure the availability and genetic integrity of West Bay Germplasm gulf cordgrass, the Plant Materials Center will provide Breeder or Foundation plants through the USDA, NRCS Seed and Plant Transfer Agreement to commercial growers for the establishment of production fields for large-scale increase.

For more information, contact:

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

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