

'Rumsey' Indiangrass

Sorghastrum nutans (L.) Nash

A Conservation Plant Release by USDA-NRCS-Elsberry Plant Materials Center, Elsberry, Missouri



Mature seed heads of 'Rumsey' Indiangrass

'Rumsey' Indiangrass

Sorghastrum nutans (L.) Nash is a cultivar released in 1983 by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), formerly the Soil Conservation Service in cooperation with the Missouri Agricultural Experiment Station.

Description

Rumsey indiangrass is a tall, warm-season, perennial native grass, forming clumps with short rhizomes. Culms are mostly coarse and erect to 2.5 meters tall. Sheaths are glabrous, elongate, 5-10 mm wide, somewhat narrowing toward the base. Panicles are light brownish and somewhat shiny, becoming darker, elliptic, 15-30 cm long. Ligules form a split defined "rifle sight" appearance at the base of each mature leaf blade.

Source

Rumsey Indiangrass was collected from native plants by Dr. Virgil B. Hawk in Jefferson County, Illinois in 1958 and was brought to the Elsberry Plant Materials and assigned the accession number M1-5734. PI 315747 was assigned in 1978.

Conservation Uses

The original purpose of selecting a superior cultivar of Indiangrass was to provide an adapted warm season grass for livestock forage production in the cornbelt states. PI 315747 met the requirements as a forage species and was also in demand for seedings for wildlife cover on state, federal and private lands devoted primarily to wildlife management. It has been found that the warm season perennial grasses are extensively used as ground

nesting wildlife cover and as excellent brood rearing areas for quail, pheasant and several non-game songbirds.

Area of Adaptation and Use

Rumsey Indiangrass has demonstrated adaptability in the following Major Land Resource Areas (MLRA): 107, northwest Iowa to central Missouri; 108, central and southeast Iowa; 115, southeast and east central Missouri; 116, southwest Missouri. Rumsey has been evaluated and shows adaptability throughout Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, as well as eastern Kansas, Nebraska and South Dakota.

Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings

Spring seedings (April-May-June) of Rumsey Indiangrass is generally preferred over fall or winter dormant planting dates. It should be seeded in a firm seedbed free of competition. Seedbeds should be firmed with a roller prior to drilling or broadcasting seed. If the seed is planted with the broadcast method, it also should be rolled afterward to help cover the seed. Seed that is drilled should be planted at a depth of ¼ to ½ inch. Five to 10 pounds of pure live seed (PLS) per acre is recommended. No-till seedings in closely grazed sod also have been



Established stand of 'Rumsey' Indiangrass planted in rows. Half of this field has been for hay.

successful where control of sod is accomplished with proper herbicide applications. In addition, early spring plantings (March-April) and fall dormant seedings (November-December) have been successful, and can provide weed and soil erosion control. Special rangeland drills capable of seeding light fluffy seed must be used to plant unprocessed/unbearded Rumsey Indiangrass seed. Seed processed by removing the appendages with a debarker may be planted with a wide variety of commonly used, grass-seeding equipment. The process

of debearding fluffy seed was developed at the Elsberry Plant Materials Center.

Controlling weeds at seeding time is important because grass establishment and survival can be suppressed by weed competition for moisture and sunlight. Weed control must be provided by tillage during seedbed preparation and by mowing. Fertilizer applied during the seeding year usually does not increase stand density, but will increase plant vigor. To limit weed growth, nitrogen should not be applied until mid-July, and only then on stands with limited weed competition. Not more than 30 pounds of nitrogen per acre should be applied during the first year.

Ecological Considerations

High application of nitrogen not only can promote cool season competition the following spring, but has been suggested to encourage lodging of Indiangrass plants.

Availability



Breeder plot of 'Rumsey' Indiangrass at the Elsberry Plant Materials Center.

For conservation use: Commercial seed of Rumsey indiangrass can be obtained from the following sources: Bamert Seed Co, Muleshoe, Texas, Grace Native Seed, Albany, Missouri, Hamilton's Native Outpost, Elk Creek, Missouri, and Star Seed, Osborne, Kansas.

For seed or plant increase: Breeder or foundation seed can be obtained for the purpose of large-scale increase, including any limitations on generations, from the USDA-NRCS, Plant Materials Center in Elsberry, Missouri.

For more information, contact:
USDA-NRCS Elsberry Plant Materials
Center, 2803 North Highway #79. Phone #
573-898-2012, Fax # 573-898-5019,
website: [http://plant-
materials.nrcs.usda.gov](http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov)

Citation

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materials.nrcs.usda.gov/](http://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/)>

Title: Rumsey indiangrass, (*Sorghastrum nutans*),
Conservation Plant Release Brochure

Author: USDA-NRCS, Elsberry Plant Materials Center,
Missouri Subject: Rumsey, indiangrass, *Sorghastrum
nutans*, Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) is a tall,
native prairie, warm-season, perennial grass. Uses
include livestock forage, hay, wildlife food and
habitat.

Keywords: Conservation Plant Release Brochure,
Indiangrass, *Sorghastrum nutans*, warm-season,
perennial, grass, native prairie, forage, hay, wildlife,
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