

**United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service  
Ecological Sciences Division Washington, DC**

**and**

**New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cornell University  
Ithaca, New York and**

**Department of Environmental Conservation State of New York  
Albany, New York and**

**Pennsylvania Game Commission Harrisburg, Pennsylvania**

**Notice of Release of 'Shelter' Switchgrass**

The United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, and Cornell University along with the New York State Division of Fish and Wild life and the Pennsylvania Game Commission announce the release of PI-430240 (NY-4006) *Panicum virgatum* L., switchgrass. The variety name is 'Shelter' which reflects the ability of the selection to provide spring nesting cover for birds, and escape cover for wildlife.

**Collection Site Information:** Soil Conservation Service personnel collected switchgrass seed from a stand located south of St. Mary's, West Virginia in 1956.

**Description:** 'Shelter' switchgrass is a perennial, warm season grass with short rhizomes. It has thicker stems and fewer leaves than other released varieties with the exception of 'Kanlow ', a much taller variety. 'Shelter' is two to six inches taller than 'Blackwell' after the second growing season, but exhibits less seedling vigor during the establishment year. 'Shelter' reaches full anthesis seven to ten days earlier than 'Blackwell' and is normally mature at Big Flats by October 1.

**Method of Breeding and Selection:** At the Big Flats Plant Materials Center, the accession was selected for upright form and stiff stems and advanced under isolation through two generations, respectively designated NY-1388 and NY-3393. In 1964, 60 plants were selected for thick stems, early maturity, number of stems and leafiness. These plants were moved to a polycross block for seed increase and assigned the number NY-4006. Seed harvested from that block was used to establish an increase field in 1968.

**Considerations and Evaluation:** 'Shelter' switchgrass retains the stiff stem characteristics of NY-4006, allowing the plants to remain erect through heavy snows in the Northeast. It is notably different from existing mid-western varieties such as 'Blackwell' and 'Cave-in-Rock' in this trait. A germplasm release of NY-4006 in 1978 by SCS and Cornell University offered breeding material to other stations. Since that time, the planting of switchgrass for erosion control, wildlife habitat, and forage has increased in the Northeast.

**Conservation Use:** The two major conservation uses of 'Shelter' switchgrass are: (1) for spring nesting cover for ground nesting birds, especially ring-necked pheasant, and (2) as a component of warm season grass mixtures for use on droughty sites. It is not recommended as a forage plant because other switchgrass varieties are superior for that use, however 'Shelter' can be grazed or hayed at appropriate growth stages with acceptable results.

**Area of Adaptation:** Switchgrass is a native warm season grass that is locally adapted from the Rocky Mountains eastward on the North American continent.

**Release Production:** Seed yields at Big Flats have averaged 62 lbs. of pure live seed per acre.

**Availability of Plant Materials:** Breeders and Foundation seed of 'Shelter' will be produced at the USDA NRCS Big Flats Plant Materials Center, Corning, New York. There will be no registered seed class recognized for 'Shelter'. Seed fields established with Foundation seed will be eligible to produce Certified seed only.

**Re-formatted and Prepared by:**

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**\*\*Original Documents and Signatures Available Upon Request\*\***