



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Plant Materials Program

# 'Saltalk' Alkali Sacaton

*Sporobolus airoides* (Torr.) Torr.

A Conservation Plant Release by USDA NRCS James E. "Bud" Smith Plant Materials Center, Knox City, TX



USDA-NRCS James E. "Bud" Smith PMC

'Saltalk' alkali sacaton [*Sporobolus airoides* (Torr.) Torr.], was released from the James E. "Bud" Smith Plant Materials Center in Knox City, Texas in 1981.

### Description

*Sporobolus airoides*, alkali sacaton, is a warm- season, native, perennial bunchgrass that grows to a height of 1 to 3 feet tall. The leaves are flat, ¼ inch wide, and taper from the base of the plant. The inflorescence is an 8020 inch open panicle with a single seed attached on each branch. Alkali sacaton will produce from seed or tillers. There are approximately 1,669,812 seeds per pound.

### Source

Saltalk alkali sacaton was collected from a native stand in Beckham County, near Erick, Oklahoma.

### Conservation Uses

Saltalk alkali sacaton was selected for use in erosion control, range seeding, and revegetation of saline and alkaline sites. It is used on oil well pits and saline waste sites from power generating plants. Alkali sacaton produces abundant forage that is grazed by livestock when it is green, but will not cure as a palatable winter feed. The plant also provides browse and seed for deer, small mammals, and birds. The dense foliage provides nesting and cover sites as well. It can also be used to prevent soil erosion on embankments, ditches, and other highly erodible sites.

### Area of Adaptation and Use

Saltalk alkali sacaton can be found throughout much of the western half of the United States and Mexico. It will grow in coarse, medium, or fine textured soils. This grass can tolerate higher levels of salinity than other species as well as a broader range of pH levels. After establishment, alkali sacaton will tolerate drought conditions as well as flooding and silt deposition. Saltalk alkali sacaton can survive in areas that receive 12-18 inches of precipitation per year.

### Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings

The full seeding rate for Saltalk alkali sacaton is 1.0 pound of pure live seed per acre. When planting this as a component of a seed mixture, the seeding rate should be adjusted to the desired percent of the mix. Seed should be placed ¼ to ½ inch deep.

Seedbed preparation should begin the year prior to spring planting to reduce weed problems during the first year of establishment. Work the site as necessary during the summer or early fall prior to establishment to create a firm weed-free seedbed. Work should be completed in the fall to allow time for the soil to settle and accumulate moisture. Minimum and no-till operations should use herbicide applications to control weeds.

Plantings should be well established before livestock grazing is permitted. Twelve months of grazing deferment should give plants enough time to become established. Established stands of Saltalk alkali sacaton should not be grazed lower than 6-8 inches, depending upon the prescribed grazing system. Contact your local U.S. Department of Agriculture-NRCS field office for assistance in planning and applying prescribed grazing plans.

Soil tests should be conducted to determine the amount of fertilizer applied to sustain a medium level. Nitrogen should not be used during the establishment year because it will encourage weed growth. Weeds may be controlled by mowing or with herbicides. Consult your local extension weed specialist for recommendations on herbicides for alkali sacaton.

### Seed and Plant Production

Saltalk alkali sacaton seed is harvested by direct combining or with a seed stripper. Average seed yield at Knox City is 270 pounds per acre.

**Availability**

*For conservation use:* Commercial seed is available from several commercial seed companies.

*For seed or plant increase:* Breeder seed will be maintained by the USDA-NRCS James E. "Bud" Smith Plant Materials Center, Knox City, Texas and is available to seed growers through the Texas Foundation Seed Service in Vernon, Texas, phone number (940) 552-6226.



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**Citation**

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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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