

GREEN NEEDLEGRASS

Nassella viridula



ORIGIN AND DESCRIPTION

Native to the northern Great Plains and adjacent areas. Rather tall, cool-season, long-lived, perennial bunchgrass. It grows 18" to 3 1/2' tall with abundant, glossy bright green basal leaves 4 to 12" long. Has a narrow contracted type head 4 to 8" long with a lemma enclosing the caryopsis that has a bent twisted awn about one inch long. Deep fibrous root system.

GROWTH HABITS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PREFERENCES

One of a few native cool season grasses with a

wide range of soil adaptation, especially tolerant of heavy clays. Adapted to 12 to 20" ppt. but may be found growing in some areas with up to 30" ppt. Starts growth in March and makes most of its vegetative growth in May and June, matures in July. Makes regrowth all summer if moisture is adequate. Thrives on clay soils and fractured shale of bottom lands, less common on sandy and loam soils. It has good drought resistance, but not as good as blue grama and nearly as good as western wheatgrass.

CULTURE

Drill 1/2 - 3/4" deep on loam and clayey soils. Drill slightly deeper on sandy soils. Plant 5 to 10 lbs. PLS per acre. Seed quality is usually 90 - 95% purity but only 20 - 30% germinate. Fresh seed should be planted in fall to break dormancy. Seed 2 to 5 years old may be less dormant and easier to get stands from. Increase 50 - 100% if broadcast seeded and on erosive sites. Control weeds in new stands and withhold grazing until stands established. Weeds need to be controlled especially in first 30 to 60 days of growth.

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Used for pasture, hay, and land stabilization, on erosive sandy to clayey soils in northern Great Plains. Seeds eaten by small rodents and song birds. Often seeded in mixtures with western wheatgrass or legumes or both.

It is best not to graze first season. Planned grazing with two months rest every other year, if possible, where warm season grasses are nearby, plan to use them in rotation. Not many disease or insect problems except occasional leaf rust. Moderately palatable, use when plants are still green and after seed drop.

IMPROVED VARIETIES

'Lodorm' released from North Dakota.

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