

INDIAN RICEGRASS

Achnatherum hymenoides



ORIGIN AND DESCRIPTION

Native widely distributed, cool season, medium-sized bunchgrass and mixed with other grasses in semiarid western U.S. Densely tufted 1 to 2.5' tall with numerous elongated leaves nearly as long as stems. Panicle type head bearing one flowered spikelets at the end of each branchlet. Short awns, plump seed nearly black at maturity.

GROWTH HABITS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PREFERENCES

Thrives on loose, coarse sands and sandy and silty soils. A pioneer on thin fractured shale and sandstone parent materials as well as many sandy soils. Not too competitive but very

drought resistant. Common in deserts with 6 to 16" ppt. Tolerant of weak salinity and alkalinity but better on neutral soils. Not tolerant of poorly drained or high water table sites. Does not like shade. Occurs at 2,000 to 10,000' elevation; often local ecotypes best adapted in general region of use.

CULTURE

Drill seed 1 - 2" deep on medium to coarse soils. Cover similarly if broadcast. Seed 5 to 10 lbs. PLS per acre and double if broadcast seeding. On some sites even higher rates may be needed to obtain desired cover. Fall dormant planting help germination (high seed dormancy). Needs to be planted in non-volunteering stubble in wind erosion areas. Mulching and supplemental irrigation helpful for rapid soil stabilization. Control weeds and do not graze until plants are well rooted. Plants may be uprooted if grazed too early.

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Used for forage, seeding dry sites and stabilizing sandy soils and mine tailings. Native stands occur in certain sandy and fractured rockland sites of drier areas of Great Plains, Great Basin and Pacific Northwest. These areas may be grazed seasonally or yearlong. Often difficult to obtain low cost seed with high germination. To prolong life of stands, allow plants to reseed occasionally. Moderately graze in winter to maintain good ground cover. Very palatable to livestock and elk.

IMPROVED VARIETIES

'Nezpar' released from Idaho.

'Paloma' released from New Mexico and Colorado.

'Rimrock' released from Utah.

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