

# SWITCHGRASS

*Panicum virgatum*



## ORIGIN AND DESCRIPTION

Native in all areas of U.S. except California and Pacific Northwest. Primary species of the mid west tall grass prairies. Medium-tall, warm season, long-lived, patchy sod grass. Strongly rhizomatous with smooth culms and abundant leaves 2' long. Light blue-green leaf blades wide, flat or folded and has orange colored foliage in the fall. Panicle head 5 to 18" long with spreading branches.

## GROWTH HABITS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PREFERENCES

Best adapted to overflow sites especially silty or clayey soils with adequate moisture. Some drought resistance but does best with 16 to 18" ppt. Tolerates early spring flooding and imper-

fect drainage conditions but not too tolerant of high water tables. Winter hardy. Tolerant of moderate salinity or acidity also low pH limit 4 to 4.5. Established stands start growth in late spring and matures in late summer or early fall and has fair regrowth into fall.

## CULTURE

Drill or broadcast seed 1/4 - 3/4" deep on firm seedbed; dead litter or mulch recommended when planting. Planting rate 2 to 4 lbs. PLS per acre with grass seed drill using small seed attachment. Light irrigation when possible can speed germination and establishment. Plant in rows for seed or intensively managed pasture. Plant usually March to April in southern Great Plains and April to May in northern Great Plains. New seedlings need protection from grasshoppers and leafhoppers. Also sometimes affected by damping off, seedling blight and rust.

## USE AND MANAGEMENT

Used irrigated and non-irrigated for grazing, hay, wildlife food, and cover. Palatable until headed and has poor palatability in fall and winter. Used for mine soil stabilization and in mixtures with little or big bluestem or Indian grass for pastures. Pure stands of high density may need fertilizer.

## IMPROVED VARIETIES

- 'Alamo' released from Texas.
- 'Blackwell' released from Kansas.
- 'Caddo' released from Oklahoma.
- 'Cave-In-Rock' released from Missouri.
- 'Dacotah' released from North Dakota.
- 'Grenville' released from New Mexico.
- 'Kanlow' released from Kansas.
- 'Nebraska 28' released from Nebraska.
- 'Pathfinder' released from Nebraska.
- 'Forestburg' released from North Dakota.
- 'Trailblazer' released from Nebraska.
- 'Summer' released from South Dakota.

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