

STREAMBANK WHEATGRASS

Elymus lanceolatus



ORIGIN AND DESCRIPTION

Native of western U.S., northern Great Plains and western Intermountain region of the U.S. Drought-tolerant, cool season, long-lived, perennial sod former. Very similar to western wheatgrass in life-form but generally smaller growth form. Single-stemmed to small tufted, about 12" tall, with open spreading rhizomes. Root system dense, fibrous, and has shallow rhizomes. Leaf blades narrow, usually inrolled and scabrous, mostly blue-green. Inflorescence an erect, terminal spike up to 8" long.

GROWTH HABITS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PREFERENCES

Most common on medium to coarse-textured soils, but adapted for seeding on clayey soils.

Moderately tolerant of saline sodic soils. Occurs on well-drained sites with water tables at 3 feet or greater depths. Tolerant of early spring flooding. Moderately shade and grazing-tolerant. Native stands occur in the 8 to 20" ppt. Seeded strains best adapted to the 10 to 18" ppt. Remains green for much of the summer. Low-growing and less of a fire hazard than taller species. Starts growth in spring and matures about 2 weeks earlier than western wheatgrass. Makes fair summer and good fall regrowth.

CULTURE

Drill seed 1/4 – 3/4" deep on fine-textured soils and up to 1" deep on coarser soils. Firming seedbeds before seeding is beneficial. Cover broadcasted seed shallow. Supplemental mulch and light irrigation on erosive and droughty sites ensure better establishment. Seed 5.5 to 11 lbs. PLS per acre. Rate should be increased for broadcasting. Seed either in early spring, late fall, or August-September with ample moisture. Seedling vigor for the species is only fair, weaker than crested and intermediate wheatgrass.

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Considered a special-purpose grass, usable chiefly for soil stabilization of disturbed lands, including roadsides, airports, recreation areas, and construction sites with little maintenance. Also used on drier parts of ditches, canals, waterways, and for mine spoils. Widely used for low ground cover. Avoid grazing of seedling stands until they are firmly rooted and headed. Well-adapted in the intermountain area. 'Critana' thickspike generally outperforms streambank in the northern Great Plains on sandy soils.

IMPROVED VARIETIES

'Sodar' released from Idaho and Washington.

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