

THICKSPIKE WHEATGRASS

Elymus macrourus



ORIGIN AND DESCRIPTION

Native of western U.S. drought-tolerant, cool season, long-lived, perennial sod-former. Very similar to western wheatgrass in life-form and appearance. Single-stemmed to small tufted, up to 3' tall, with widely spreading rhizomes. Leaf blades narrow, usually inrolled and scabrous, mostly green but sometimes blue-green. Inflorescence an erect, terminal spike up to 8" long.

GROWTH HABITS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PREFERENCES

Medium to coarse-textured soils, including sandy soils, but considered adapted for seeding on clayey soils. Tolerant of weakly saline soils. Occurs on well-drained sites with water tables at

3' or greater depths but moderately tolerant of early spring flooding. Native stands occur in the 6 to 20" ppt. and seeded strains believed best adapted to the 12 to 18" ppt. Wide elevational occurrence, near sea level near Great Lakes to 10,000' in the Wasatch Range.

CULTURE

Drill seed 1/2" deep on fine-textured soils and up to 1" deep on coarser soils. Cover broadcasted seed shallow. Supplemental mulch and light irrigation on erosive and droughty sites ensure better establishment. Use 5 to 10 lbs. PLS per acre seed rate for rangelands. Rate should be increased 50 - 100 % for broadcasting with this species. Drill seed either in early spring, late fall, or late summer-early fall (Aug.-Sept.) with ample moisture. Weeds need to be controlled on new seedings. Avoid grazing of seedling stands until they are firmly rooted and headed.

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Special purpose grass used for soil stabilization of disturbed lands, including roadsides, airports, recreation areas, and construction receiving little maintenance. Also used for drier parts of ditches, canals, and waterways, ski slopes and for mine spoils. Palatability good in summer and fair in winter for cattle, good palatability to elk yearlong, but only fair to deer in spring.

Starts growth in spring and matures about 3 weeks earlier than western wheatgrass. Makes fair summer and good fall regrowth.

Moderate spring-fall grazing and rotation grazing recommended for ranges in satisfactory condition. Deferred grazing, (only in fall), prescribed to improve ranges in unsatisfactory condition.

IMPROVED VARIETIES

'Critana' released from Montana and Wyoming. 'Bannock' released from Idaho, Oregon, and Washington.

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