

VIRGINIA WILDRYE

Elymus virginicus



ORIGIN AND DESCRIPTION

Native, cool season, perennial bunchgrass. Distributed in milder climates throughout most of the U.S. Robust, with culms 3 to 4' tall. Wide flat leaf blades with leaf sheath long, smooth and round on stems. Seed head a nodding spike with awned spikelets.

GROWTH HABITS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PREFERENCES

Grows principally on moist soils in woodlands

and along drainage ways that overflow occasionally. Does well on light textured soils that have good internal drainage. Adapted to 24 to over 30" ppt. Optimal in overflow and subirrigated sites. Grows best in 20 - 30% shade.

CULTURE

Plant at 1/2 - 3/4" depth and drill 10 to 20 lbs. PLS per acre. Seed early spring or as early as possible on mountain sites. Good seedling vigor. Often seeded in mixtures with other grasses and forbs.

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Used for forage, roadsides and wildlife seedings. In the South, starts growth in late fall when daily temperatures are 50 to 60° F. Produces seed in May to early June and becomes dormant during hot summer months. Most of the leaves grow widely spaced along the stem rather than from the base of plant. For this reason, Virginia wildrye is not a high forage producer. However, it is readily grazed by livestock and deer, particularly during fall, winter and spring. Because leaves are easily accessible to all livestock, a deferred grazing system is essential, particularly in late spring and early fall.

Seeded on sub-irrigated and flooded sites it provides standing winter-feed and cover for wildlife. Many upland birds will eat the seed.

IMPROVED VARIETIES

'Omaha' from Nebraska.

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