

BIG CORDGRASS

Spartina cynosuroides (L.)

Roth

Plant symbol = SPCY

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Alternate Names

Salt reedgrass

Uses

Cattle graze big cordgrass. Ducks and geese eat the tender shoots that grow after marshes are burned in early fall.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status, such as, state noxious status and wetland indicator values.

Description

Grass Family (Poaceae). Big cordgrass is a warm-season, robust, rhizomatous perennial. The height ranges from 3 to 10 feet. The leaf blade is flat and 1/2 to 1 inch wide; often 18 to 24 inches long; rough and sharp margin. The leaf sheath is rounded.

The ligule has short membrane and densely hairy. The stem is thick, round and often 3/4 inch in diameter at base. The seedhead has 20 to 40 spikes, each about 3 inches long, and spikelets about 1/2 inch long growing on one side of rachis with the seedhead growing 12 to 18 inches long.

Management

For best production and plant vigor, graze big cordgrass during fall and winter and defer grazing during summer.

Establishment

Major growth is from late March through September or October. Seedheads form during fall. The base of the plant remains green through the winter. It reproduces from robust rhizomes, which form dense colonies. This plant is primarily adapted to mineral soils in salt marshes. It tolerates moderate salinity and water levels that fluctuate from 4 inches below soil surface to 2 inches above. It is closely associated with marsh-hay cordgrass (*Spartina patens*) and common reed (*Phragmites australis*).

Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Please contact your local NRCS Field Office.

Reference

Leithead, H.L., L.L. Yarlett, & T.N. Shiflett. 1976. 100 native forage grasses in 11 southern states. USDA SCS *Agriculture Handbook No. 389*, Washington, DC.

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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