

GIANT CANE

Arundinaria gigantea (Walt.)
Muhl.

Plant symbol = ARG1

Contributed By: USDA NRCS National Plant Data Center



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Alternate Names

cane, switchcane

Uses

Giant cane provides high-quality forage for cattle, horses, hogs, and sheep. It is valued for summer grazing in northern part of range and for winter grazing in states along the gulf coast. Stems of this grass are also used for fishing poles, pipe stems, baskets, and mats.

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

Giant cane is a native, warm-season, robust, rhizomatous perennial grass. The height is between 4 and 20 feet. The leaf blade is 5 to 12 inches long, at least 1/2 inch wide, and tapers to a sharp point. Generally, it has groups of 3 to 5 blades at end of small branches and a short petiole between the blade and sheath. The leaf sheath is rounded and overlapping. The ligule is a row of short hair. The stem is hollow, woody. The seedhead is an open panicle with 8 to 12 spikelets per seedhead.

Distribution: For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Management

Overgrazing and uncontrolled burning easily kills this grass. For maximum production, no more than 50 percent of current year's growth by weight should be grazed off at any season. Controlled burning should be done under ideal humidity, soil moisture, and wind conditions no more than every 3 to 4 years. Deferred grazing for at least 90 days during summer every 2 to 3 years improves plant vigor. Overgrazed stands require complete protection from grazing and fire during the growing season to allow plants to regain vigor.

Establishment

Giant cane produces green leaves and stems all year. It grows vigorously from rhizomes and from auxiliary buds at basal nodes. It also grows in small colonies, thickets, and large canebrakes as well as makes vigorous growth under a dense stand of trees. It is adapted to moist soils along riverbanks and in bottomlands and similar sites. It does best on soils of high fertility.

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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Edited: 13may02 ahv; jul03 ahv; 20sep05 jsp

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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