

TALL OATGRASS

Arrhenatherum elatius (L.) Presl.

Plant Symbol = AREL3

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials
Program



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Uses

Erosion control: Tall oatgrass is a useful conservation grass for cover and forage on surface mined lands and marginal pastureland.

Livestock: Tall oatgrass can be used for livestock forage beginning in its second growing season; however, it is not recommended as a major component of forage seedings as other grasses are superior for this purpose.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description

Arrhenatherum elatius, tall oatgrass, is a perennial, cool-season bunchgrass generally grown in Europe where it once was a component of the grasslands. Culms are erect, from 3 to 5 feet tall. Leaf blades, from 3/8 to 3/4 inches wide, are flat and rough to the touch. Seed heads are narrow panicles 6 to 10 inches long with long, twisted, angled, exposed awns.

Adaptation and Distribution

Introduced from Europe in the early 1800s, tall oatgrass has become naturalized in meadows, fields, open ground, waste places, and roadsides from Newfoundland to British Columbia, south to Georgia, Louisiana, New Mexico, and California. For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Establishment

Tall oatgrass is easily established, adapted to excessively drained low fertility soils, and compatible with legumes. A firm, weed-free seedbed is necessary for good stands. Spring seedings produce best results as the seedlings are not winter hardy. Seeding rates should range from 5 to 8 pounds pure live seed using hulled seed. Seed should be planted approximately 1/4 inch deep and cultipacked.

Management

Apply lime and fertilizer according to soil test results when seeding and for maintenance. Use of herbicides in the establishment year to control broadleaf weeds will improve success of the planting. Mow or graze for control in subsequent years.

Pests and Potential Problems

Tall oatgrass is highly resistant to disease and insects.

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

Seed is available from commercial seed producers.

Prepared By & Species Coordinator:

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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 Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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