

BEARDLESS WILDRYE

Leymus triticoides (Buckl.)

Pilger

Plant Symbol = LETR5

Contributed by: USDA NRCS California State Office
and Lockeford Plant Materials Center, California



Robert Mohlenbrock
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Alternate Names

Creeping wildrye

Uses

Beardless wildrye is used for soil stabilization on channel, stream and river slopes and restoration of roadside, riparian and rangeland areas. It is also used for forage or cover on wet or wet-saline-alkaline soils. This includes pastureland; saline-affected, irrigated cropland; and dryland, saline-seep discharge areas. In good soils, roots may go down 10 ft. It also lays flat during high water flow periods, thus allowing full water flow while still protecting the streambank. It provides high quality waterfowl and upland game nesting habitat. This species' flood tolerance is excellent. It is found in flood plains that receive prolonged inundation

Ethnobotanic uses: Beardless wildrye seed was used by Native Americans for food.

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

General: Grass Family (Poaceae). Beardless wildrye is a cool-season, perennial, sod-forming native grass. It is a long grass that is typically tall and strongly rhizomatous. The stems are often smooth, but can be hairy. Leaf blades are green to blue-green and 2.5-4 mm wide with a slightly rough upper surface.

Distribution

Beardless wildrye is distributed at low and medium elevations from Montana to Washington and south to west Texas and California. For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Adaptation

This grass grows on mostly heavy soils in riparian areas, bottomlands, valleys, foothills, mountain flats and meadows from coastal marshes to high elevations.

Establishment

Beardless wildrye can be established by seed, sod or rhizomes.

Management

If managed properly, it will develop into large patches or colonies, but cultivation restricts it. It can be valuable forage in certain areas, especially on meadows that become dry, where it is grazed through most of the summer. It resists trampling and recovers well from grazing. At lower elevations it is coarser for grazing than annuals. It will also tolerate mowing well, especially if mowed late in the growing season and if not mowed too short. It is also fire tolerant. After mowing or burning it begins green-up in the late summer if deep soil moisture is adequate. In spite of delayed germination of up to one month and poor seedling vigor, it can compete sufficiently with weeds and annual grasses to dominate a site in the second year.

Pests and Potential Problems

None

Seeds and Plant Production

Beardless wildrye seed matures in late spring to early summer. Most wild ecotypes flower but do not produce seed. If viable seed is present, it can be collected for 4-20 weeks. The seed does not shatter as easily as many other species. There are between 110,000 and 130,000 seeds/lb. and if planted at a rate of 1 lb./acre there would be approximately 2.8 seeds/square foot.

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

'Rio' Cultivar- This cultivar was selected at the NRCS Plant Materials Center, Lockeford, California. It was collected in 1973 from a native stand in Stratford, Kings County, CA. Seed and rhizomes were harvested from test plots at the Lockeford Plant Materials Center and used for testing throughout the Mediterranean climate in California. It demonstrated superior seed viability and initial sod establishment in comparison with about 12 other California native collections.

'Shoshone' Cultivar- This cultivar was collected in 1958 from a stand at Riverton, WY fairgrounds. The stand was possibly a seeded stand established in the 1940s from an unknown source. It is an exceptionally leafy, fine stemmed, high forage producer; rhizomes especially vigorous, extending 1.8 m in one season; leaves broad, lax, and dark green. Comparatively high seed production for this species; seed plump and heavy.

Shoshone is used primarily for forage, stabilization, or cover on wet or wet-saline-alkaline soils. This included pastureland; saline-affected, irrigated cropland; and dryland saline-seep discharge areas. Seed dormancy requires fall dormant planting in moist seedbed.

Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service) office for more information. Look in the phone book under "United States Government." The Natural Resources Conservation Service will be listed under the subheading "Department of Agriculture."

References

USDA-NRCS. November 1994. *Grass Varieties in the United States*. Washington, D.C.

USDA-NRCS. 1991. *Notice of release of 'Rio' beardless wildrye*. USDA-NRCS Ecological Sciences Division, Washington, D.C. and the California

Agricultural Experiment Station, UC Davis, Davis, California..

Wrynski, Jeanette. 2000. *Know your natives: A pictorial guide to California native grasses, creeping wildrye*. Yolo County Resource Conservation District, Woodland, California.

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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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