



United States Department of Agriculture

**Soil Conservation Service**

Davis, California



# 'Berber' Orchardgrass



## **'Berber' Orchardgrass**

*(Dactylis glomerata L.)*

The USDA Soil Conservation Service, and the California Agricultural Experiment Station cooperated in the release of 'Berber' orchardgrass. 'Berber' is a long lived, drought resistant, cool season perennial bunchgrass, native to Europe. It was originally tested and grown in South Australia, and then dropped from commercial production. It has been tested in the Mediterranean climate area of California for erosion control on natural and man-made disturbed areas, and for dryland range use.

### **Description**

'Berber' is a dryland, cool season perennial bunchgrass that grows from 40 to 115cm (16-46 inches) high. Leaf blades are distinctly folded and sheaths are compressed. The cocksfoot seed head (panicle) is 10 to 25cm (4-10 inches) long with spikelets in dense, compact, one-sided clusters at the end of its branches. Spikelets are about 8mm (.3 inches) long with lemmas 3 to 4mm (0.1-0.2 inches) long, pointed. Seed is slightly smaller than 'Akaroa' and 'Palestine' orchardgrasses.

### **Adaptation**

'Berber' is suited to well drained, coarse to fine textured soils, shallow to deep and medium to slightly saline-alkaline. It does not perform well on wet or poorly drained soils. It is drought tolerant and will persist and provide good erosion cover with annual precipitation of 14 to 16 inches or on areas receiving some supplemental irrigation. In California, it is adapted to Major Land Resource Areas 4, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20.

### **Uses**

It appears that 'Berber' could be used for erosion and fire control in areas adjacent to housing developments. It is very drought tolerant, and would remain green throughout the summer with small amounts of supplemental water. 'Berber' is an excellent erosion control plant and shows good results on the better annual rangeland soils.

### **Establishment**

'Berber' has good seedling vigor and has shown superior seedling establishment to 'Palestine,' 'Kasbah,' and 'Currie' orchardgrasses 'Luna' pubescent wheatgrass, 'Oahe' intermediate wheatgrass, and Hardinggrass. Seed matures in late June; the five year average is 305 pound per acre, with seed planted at a 4-pound per acre rate in 30 inch rows with a Planet Junior planter. Harvest is accomplished by windrowing and then combining with a John Deere 2300 harvester. No particular seed harvest problems have been encountered.

### **Seed Availability**

Breeder and foundation seed are maintained by the Lockeford Plant Materials Center. Foundation seed can be obtained through the California Crop Improvement Association and local Resource Conservation Districts. Seed of 'Berber' is commercially available.

The Plant Materials Center located in Lockeford, California is one of the 23 centers the Soil Conservation Service operates. Special emphasis is placed on finding suitable plants for erosion control on soils and sites where it is difficult to establish protective vegetative cover.

Plant materials are a significant component of about two-thirds of the conservation practices that farmers, ranchers and others find essential to the solution of erosion and sedimentation problems. It is SCS policy to assemble, evaluate, release and distribute for commercial increase, new or improved plant materials needed for resource conservation and development.

SCS assistance is available without regard to race, creed, color, sex, or national origin.