

Management

Fertilization to moderate levels of phosphorus and potassium are recommended for establishment. Nitrogen applications are not recommended until the grass is established and well above the competing weeds. Fertilizer may be applied late in the first summer of establishment at a rate of 20 to 40 pounds per acre of phosphorus and potassium or in the early summer of the second year at 40 to 80 pounds per acre rate. In future years fertilize as needed to enhance vigor and production of forage. For critical area seedings, no additional fertilization is necessary.

If well-established stands of Indiangrass are properly managed and maintained, they should not require replanting. Poor stands can be rejuvenated by using proper management practices, such as controlled grazing, the application of recommended rates of herbicides and fertilizer, and prescribed burning, where permitted, before the beginning of spring growth. Nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium fertilizer should be applied according to soil tests.

In rotational grazing systems, remove no more than ½ the above ground growth (no shorter than 8 to 12 inches). With care, the stand will last indefinitely. Forage quality will remain high until the seed head emerges. Grazing should begin from mid to late June when grasses reach 12 to 16 inches in height. Overgrazing can damage the stand and should be stopped when the plants are grazed to within 6 inches of the ground. If re-growth of more than 12 inches takes place, the plants can be re-grazed to 6 to 12 inches. Leaving this much stubble before frost allows the plants to store carbohydrates and ensures the production of vigorous plant growth in the spring.

Opportunities to Participate

NRCS Field Offices, District Employees, Partners and Volunteers: We need your help!

The Cape May PMC serves a nine-state area extending from Massachusetts to North Carolina. The plant developmental process used by the Cape May PMC relies heavily on the cooperation of our conservation partners to locate native plant stands; collect materials and ship them to Cape May; locate suitable plant testing sites; record plant performance data; and publish new scientific findings. Call the Cape May PMC for more details about how you can help.

Tours Available

Visitors are always welcome at the PMC. The center is open Monday through Friday. Please call the PMC to schedule your visit.

USDA NRCS Plant Materials Center
1536 Route Nine North
Cape May Court House NJ 08210
Tele: (609) 465-5901
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Suther Germplasm Indiangrass Source Identified Germplasm

Sorghastrum nutans (L.) Nash.

A North Carolina Ecotype

*Cape May PMC products are
helping people help the land
through better plants and science*

Indiangrass



Hitchcock, A.S. (rev. A. Chase). 1950. *Manual of the grasses of the United States*. USDA Misc. Publ. No. 200. Washington, DC. 1950.

Scientific Name:

[*Sorghastrum nutans* (L.) Nash.]

Common Name:

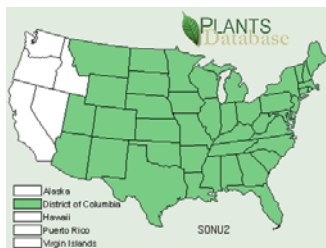
Indiangrass

Description:

Indiangrass is a native, perennial, warm-season bunchgrass and a major component of the tall grass vegetation which once dominated the prairies of the central and eastern United States. Indiangrass grows 3 to 5 feet tall. Even as a young plant, it can be distinguished from other native grass species by the “rifle-sight” ligule at the point where the leaf attaches to the stem. The leaf blade also narrows at the point of attachment. The seed is light and fluffy with small awns attached.

Plant Distribution:

Prior to using any plant material determine its local invasive status.



Establishment

Indiangrass and other warm-season grasses require a soil temperature above 50°F for satisfactory germination. Dormant seedings have not been successful. The optimum time to plant is from early May to late June.

If seed is drilled for solid stands, use 6 to 8 pounds per acre rate PLS (pure live seed). For broadcast seedings, the rate should be between 12 and 15 pounds per acre. Seeding depth is ¼ inch. If seed is broadcast or hydro-seeded, it is important to “incorporate” the seed by tracking with a heavy machine to improve the seed to soil contact. Indiangrass has strong seedling vigor, but stands are slow to develop where competition from broadleaf weeds and cool-season grasses are heavy. New seedlings into fine-textured soils where weeds are persistent may require no-till establishment to minimize the amount of exposed weed seeds. The cool-season grasses must be controlled with a contact herbicide before seeding. Also, Indiangrass shows tolerance to most broadleaf herbicides. It is important to follow label instructions for application amounts and grazing requirements.

The most common cause of failure of warm-season grasses is a loose seedbed. Conventionally-tilled seedbeds should be packed before and especially after seeding. The seedbed should be firm enough to show only a light imprint when stepped on. When using a no-till drill, be sure the coulter furrows are closed to avoid seed exposure and drying. This can be accomplished by culti-packing after the drilling operation.

Photo of PMC Production Field



Seed increase plot at the Cape May PMC.

Origin

Suther Germplasm Indiangrass originated from Cabarras County North Carolina. Because the tact never experienced the American plow, the plant community was considered a remnant eastern U.S. prairie system.

Adaptation

Area of adaptation have not been determined. However, this geno-type has exhibited typical morphological characteristics as far north as Cape May NJ.

Application and Uses

- ◆ USDA Conservation Programs
- ◆ Providing food and cover for Wildlife
- ◆ Increasing species diversity
- ◆ Controlling erosion
- ◆ Restoring native plant environments