

‘Alamo’ Switchgrass - Could It Be A Friendly Fuel for Cars?

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In late-January, President George W. Bush outlined a powerful vision during his State of the Union speech focusing on the opportunity to develop new alternative energy source that has the potential to reduce our nation’s dependence on oil. One source, which is a grass called switchgrass, *Panicum virgatum*, can possibly be an efficient and environmentally friendly fuel for cars by the year 2012.

Switchgrass has the possibility of becoming an alternative energy source by converting it from a biomass-based renewable energy source into a fuel like ethanol. Current research is ongoing into ways to optimize switchgrass production, such as knowing how to plant, grow, harvest, and deliver the product. There are several named varieties of switchgrass released for conservation use from the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service’s (NRCS) Plant Materials Program in the United States. One of them is ‘Alamo’ switchgrass, which was released from the Plant Materials Center located near Knox City, Texas.

‘Alamo’ switchgrass was originally collected on the banks of the Frio River near George West, Texas. It was evaluated, selected, and released by the Plant Materials Center near Knox City as a superior plant for its better forage yield and seed production.

‘Alamo’ switchgrass is a native, perennial warm-season grass better adapted to southern areas when compared to other cultivars, such as ‘Blackwell’ and ‘Kanlow’ released from the Manhattan Kansas Plant Materials Center.

‘Alamo’ switchgrass is best adapted in areas where rainfall is 25 inches or more per year. In areas with less than 25 inches of annual precipitation, ‘Alamo’ switchgrass can be used under irrigation or on naturally wet sites. ‘Alamo’ switchgrass’s performance is good on all kinds of soils from clays to fine sands. ‘Alamo’ can be used for range seeding, pastures, hay production, wildlife food and cover plantings, for revegetation of disturbed areas, and some day producers may be growing and harvesting switchgrass to be converted into energy to run your car.



**'Alamo' switchgrass in Yield Production
And Nutrient Uptake Study**

For more information on how to grow and harvest 'Alamo' switchgrass, please visit our web site <http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>, or contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District Office and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

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