

SEASHORE DROPSEED

Sporobolus virginicus (L.)

Kunth

Plant Symbol = SPVI3

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Hawaii PMC and
National Plant Data Center



Forest & Kim Starr, Keomoku Beach Lanai, Hawaii
From www.hear.org, Plants of Hawaii

Alternate Names

Aki aki, aki, mahiki, mahikihiki, manienie, manienie
aki aki, manienie mahikihiki, manienie maoli,
seashore rushgrass, marshgrass, crabgrass, beach
dropseed.

Uses

Conservation:

Sporobolus virginicus does very well as a dune
stabilizer. It has potential for stream bank
stabilization and also roadside slope stabilization.

Cultural:

In some places *S. virginicus* is medicinally used to
relieve urinary irritation and throat irritation.

Wildlife:

Many native seabirds find shelter and build nests in
coastal stands of *S. virginicus*. It also provides
excellent winter food for wild geese.

Forage:

S. virginicus has high protein and mineral content and
is readily grazed by cattle.

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

Sporobolus virginicus is a low-growing vigorous
perennial grass that spreads by rhizomes. The height
ranges from 4 to 8 inches tall. Roots can grow down
to 18" deep. Leaves are 1-4" long and 0.04-0.12"
wide with distinctly two-ranked and salt crystals
common on leaves and stems. The leaf sheath is
overlapping and hairy at the throat. Its inflorescence
is dense and spike-like. The panicle, 3" long, is
shorter than other *Sporobolus* species.

Adaptation and Distribution

S. virginicus is commonly found in coastal dune
habitats and it does best if sea water level fluctuates
from 2 inches above soil surface to 6 inches below.
It also does well in a variety of different soils from
clays to sands. Being a plant that is adapted to low
rainfall and high salinity, *S. virginicus* is fairly wide
spread throughout the tropical regions and is native to
the Pacific Islands Region as well as the continental
United States. It also occurs in Africa, western
seaboard of India, Sri Lanka, and Australia.

Establishment

Although *S. virginicus* does produce seed, very little
of it is viable. The only practical way to propagate it
is by vegetative rhizomatous slips. Actively growing
slips should be selected for propagation. Cut back
increase-plots to initiate active growth. Cut
rhizomatous slips 3-4' long and plant in sterile, well
drained medium such as Sunshine4™ potting mix
which has worked well. Place propagules under 50%
shade and keep planting medium moist. Once the

slips begin to take, it is recommended that time-release fertilizer supplements be added. After 2 months, place propagules in full sunlight to harden off. Propagules should be ready to plant within 3-4 months.



Britton & Brown (1913); from plant.usda.gov

Management

Sporobolus virginicus is a low maintenance conservation plant. Because it is very drought tolerant, water requirements are relatively low. It is recommended, though, that irrigation be applied during the first 1-2 months after transplanting to help establish plots. *S. virginicus* is also adapted to low fertility soils, although nutrient amendments according to soil tests would be beneficial for rapid establishment.

If forage production is desired, no more than half of the growth should be removed by grazing. Summer grazing deferments of at least 120 days are important to maintain good vigor. Controlled burning of this grass will result in lush, tender forage for winter grazing. Burning should be done no more than every 2 years. Allow 4 inches of re-growth after burning before grazing.

Pests and Potential Problems

Despite its wide range throughout subtropical and tropical regions of the world, *S. virginicus* is believed to be pest free.

Environmental Concerns

None.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials

None available at this time. No known commercial source.

Reference

Leithead, H.L., L.L. Yarlett, & T.N. Shiflett. 1976. 100 native forage grasses in 11 southern states. USDA SCS Agriculture Handbook No. 389, Washington, DC.

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