

SEASHORE PASPALUM

Panicum vaginatum Sw.
Plant Symbol = PAVA

Contributed by: USDA NRCS East Texas Plant
Materials Center



USDA NRCS Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center

Alternate Names

Siltgrass, Sheathed Paspalum, Salt Jointgrass,
Seaside Millet, Sand Knotgrass, and Saltwater Couch

Uses

Forage:

Seashore paspalum is used as forage in some areas. It resists over grazing due to its low growth habit, but as with most forage grasses, proper management is essential to maintain vigorous, healthy stands. It is recommended that no more than 50% of the annual biomass be removed via grazing or cutting. It is typically grazed in the summer and early fall, and has moderate palatability.

Wildlife:

Due to its low growth form, turf formation, and low palatability among browse animals, seashore paspalum is not a highly significant wildlife plant. Geese and other herbivores will graze tender shoots,

and it provides some cover for small vertebrates and invertebrates.

Landscaping:

Seashore paspalum forms dense sod if mowed to a one inch height and makes an attractive turf grass. It will withstand traffic well, and has been successfully used on golf courses. Some varieties have a two toned appearance to their leaf surfaces which create an attractive striped effect when mowed. Because of its salt tolerance, this species can be used successfully in areas with saline soils or groundwater.

Conservation:

Seashore paspalum makes an excellent shoreline protector. It spreads rapidly, forming dense stands that anchor soil particles and dissipate wave energy. It is easy to establish, and can withstand moderately high salinity and brief inundation. It can also uptake heavy metals, and is a candidate as a buffer or filter strip plant for Phytoremediation of such substances.

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 and Adaptation

Description

Seashore paspalum is a native, low growing, warm season, perennial grass that reaches approximately 20 inches in height. It is highly stoloniferous and rhizomatous, similar to bermudagrass, *Cynodon dactylon*, and will tack down at the nodes forming a dense turf. Seed heads are similar to other paspalums, and typically form a fork with 2 racemes. The leaves are fine, approximately 2mm in width, sharply pointed with large sheaths, a small, scale-like ligule, and have a deep blue-green color.

Adaptation

Seashore paspalum favors medium to fine textured soils with a pH between 6 and 8. It will not tolerate shade, drought, or freezing. It prefers moist to saturated sites and can withstand brief inundations. Prolonged flooding is detrimental. It is salt tolerant, with some varieties able to tolerate irrigation from sea water.

Distribution

Seashore paspalum is distributed across the southeastern seaboard from Texas to North Carolina. It is commonly associated with brackish and freshwater wetlands along the gulf and Atlantic coasts.

Establishment

Seashore paspalum produces seed, but they are rarely viable. It is established vegetatively using sod, containerized material, stolons, and rhizomes. Planting material may be harvested and planted in the same manner as bermudagrass. Rhizomes and sprigs root and grow easily within 7-14 days. When using sprigs, use at least two nodes per sprig to insure establishment, and keep moist until a strong root system develops. Young plants should be fertilized with a balanced fertilizer. Containerized material is best planted in the winter and early spring.

Management

Seashore paspalum responds well to nitrogen fertilization up to 8 lbs/1000 ft² per year. However, nitrogen levels greater than 4 lbs/1000 ft² per year promotes succulent growth, which encourages scalping when closely mowed as a turf grass. Nitrogen rates greater than 4 lbs/1000 ft² should only be used if cutting is done high, such as for hay production. Scalping promotes disease, creates plant stress, and lowers productivity. Lower levels of nitrogen inhibit this and provide ample growth. Excellent results are obtained with split applications of ½ - 1 lb of nitrogen per 1000 ft² throughout the growing season. This is much lower than the fertility requirements of bermudagrasses. Seashore paspalum can out compete bermudagrass under such conditions. Due to its salinity tolerance, salt water may be used as inexpensive irrigation and a selective herbicide to maintain stands of seashore paspalum.

Pests and Potential Problems

When maintained properly, seashore paspalum has very few disease and insect problems. It is susceptible to damage from mole crickets, sod webworms, spittlebugs, white grubs, billbugs, cutworms, and fall army worms, but usually has no problems with chinch bugs. It is also susceptible to fusarium blight and Helminthosporium disease. Proper mowing heights, irrigation, and fertilization will minimize any effects from pests.

Environmental Concerns

None, though seashore paspalum is sometimes an invader on golf courses in some areas of the world.

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

Commercial varieties and improved material includes: 'Sea Isle 1' from the University of Georgia, collected in Argentina; 'Sea Way' and 'Salam' produced in Florida; Brazoria, a Germplasm release from the Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center in Galliano, Louisiana; 'Tropic Shore' from the Hoolehua Plant Materials Center in Hawaii; 'Adalyd', one of the oldest varieties; and 'AP-10'

Prepared By:

R. Alan Shadow, Soil Conservationist, USDA NRCS East Texas Plant Materials Center

Species Coordinator:

Edited:

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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