

ARIZONA COTTONTOP

Digitaria californica (Benth.)
Henr.
Plant Symbol = DICA8

Contributed By: USDA NRCS National Plant Data Center



From Hitchcock (1950)
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Alternative Names

Cottontop, cotton-top, Arizona cottongrass, cotton grass, punta blanca, California cottontop, *Trichachne californica*

Uses

Arizona cottontop is grazed by cattle, horses, and sometimes by sheep and goats. It is most palatable when green. It cures well on the stem and provides dry forage for cattle. It has been used in range seedlings in south Texas following brush control.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status, such as, state noxious status and wetland indicator values.

Description

Grass Family (Poaceae). Arizona cottontop is native, warm-season, perennial bunch grass. The height ranges from 1-1/2 to 2 feet. The leaf blade is flat, narrow, and usually less than 5 inches long. The leaf sheath is covered with small hairs. The stem has swollen base, scaly, and hairy. The seedhead is an open panicle. The second glume and sterile lemma are covered with long white (occasionally purple) hairs, giving it a silky cottony appearance after the seed ripens.

Distribution: For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Management

To keep Arizona cottontop vigorous and maintain it in the plant community, defer grazing 60 to 70 days every 2 to 3 years before seed maturity. No more than 50 percent of current year's growth by weight should be removed by grazing.

Establishment

It grows rapidly following late spring and summer rains and continues to grow as long as moisture is available. It reproduces primarily from seed and usually produces a good seed crop. Seed remain viable for as long as 10 years. It seldom grows in pure stands and grows best on gravelly and sandy loam soils.

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

Please contact your local NRCS Field Office.

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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Plant Materials <<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/>>

Plant Fact Sheet/Guide Coordination Page <<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/pfs.html>>

National Plant Data Center <<http://npdc.usda.gov>>

Edited: 13may02 ahv; jul03 ahv; 20sep05 jsp; 070116 jsp

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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