

NEEDLE AND THREAD

Heterostipa comata (L.) Trin.
& Rupr.) Barkworth ssp.
comata

Plant symbol = HECOC8

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Alternate Names

needle & thread grass, needleandthread, *Stipa comata*

Uses

Needle and thread is grazed readily by all livestock, especially in early spring and late fall. It cures well on the stem and provides good forage in fall and winter.

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). Needle and thread is a native, cool-season, perennial bunch grass. It ranges in height from 1 to 4 feet. It has narrow basal leaves with the blade usually rolled inward, 3 to 12 inches long. Leaves along the stem are shorter and wider than the basal leaves. The seedhead is an open panicle 5 to 10 inches long that is loosely spreading with 1-flowered spikelets. Each seed is 3/8 inch long. The lemma has a slender awn usually 4 to 5 inches long, sometimes 9 inches. Part of the awn

next to the seed is tightly twisted and covered with fine soft hair. The awn tip is rough and usually straight.

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

Management

Periodic grazing deferments of at least 90 days and proper grazing use allow this grass to make maximum production and keep it in balance with associated grasses. To prevent seed from injuring sheep and contaminating wool, remove sheep for 2 to 3 weeks until seed ripen and fall to the ground.

Establishment

It grows in the early spring and in the late fall if moisture is available. It produces an abundance of basal leaves, which stay green during most seasons. It reproduces from seed and is primarily adapted to sandy or gravelly 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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Edited: 13may02 ahv; jul03 ahv; 20sep05 jsp

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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