



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Plant Materials Program

Potter County Germplasm Spike Dropseed

Sporobolus contractus (Hitchc.)

A Conservation Plant Release by USDA NRCS James E. "Bud" Smith Plant Materials Center, Knox City, TX



1USDA-NRCS James E. "Bud" Smith PMC

Potter County Germplasm spike dropseed, *Sporobolus contractus* (Hitchc.), was released from the James E. "Bud" Smith Plant Materials Center in Knox City, Texas in 2000.

Description

Spike dropseed is a perennial, warm-season, native bunchgrass which grows in small clumps to an average height of 36 inches. The inflorescence of spike dropseed is a densely contracted spike-like panicle which can grow from 12 to 18 inches long and ½ inch wide. Leaf blades are smooth and flat when the plant is green, but become V-shaped when the plant begins drying. The blades are ½ inch wide and 14 inches long. There are approximately 2,885,000 seed per pound of spike dropseed.

Source

Potter County Germplasm spike dropseed was originally collected from native plants located in the Canadian River bottomland approximately 18 miles north of Amarillo, Texas.

Conservation Uses

Potter County Germplasm may be used in pure stands or as a component in seed mixtures for range restoration. It has a potential use in pasture plantings, filter strips, erosion control and critical area plantings. The forage value for spike dropseed is fair for all livestock and wildlife. Plants are utilized by ground nesting birds and small mammals. Upland birds also feed on the mature seed produced from spike dropseed.

Area of Adaptation and Use

Potter County Germplasm spike dropseed is adapted to a wide range of soil types, but will perform best on sandy loam, loamy fine sands and silty soils. Spike dropseed reseeds itself readily on ranges following overgrazing or drought.

Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings

The full seedling rate for Potter County Germplasm spike dropseed is 1.0 pound of pure live seed per acre. When planting this as a component of a seed mixture, the seeding rate should be adjusted to the desired percent of the mix. Seed should be placed ¼ to ½ inch deep.

Seedbed preparation should begin the year prior to spring planting to reduce weed problems during the first year of establishment. Work the site as necessary during the summer or early fall prior to establishment to create a firm weed-free seedbed. Work should be completed in the fall to allow time for the soil to settle and accumulate moisture. Minimum and no-till operations should use herbicide applications to control weeds.

Plantings should be well established before livestock grazing is permitted. Twelve months of grazing deferment should give plants enough time to become established. Established stands of Potter County Germplasm spike dropseed should not be grazed lower than 5-6 inches, depending upon the prescribed grazing system. Contact your local USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service field office for assistance in planning and applying prescribed grazing plans.

Soil tests should be conducted to determine the amount of fertilizer applied to sustain a medium level. Nitrogen should not be used during the establishment year because it will encourage weed growth. Weeds may be controlled by mowing or with herbicides. Consult your local extension weed specialist for recommendations on herbicides for spike dropseed.

Seed and Plant Production

Spike dropseed is harvested by either direct combining, or with a seed stripper. Average seed yield at Knox City is 230 pounds per acre.

Availability

For conservation use: Commercial seed is available from several commercial seed companies.

For seed or plant increase: Generation zero (G0) seed (equivalent to Breeder seed) will be maintained by the USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center in Knox City, Texas and is available through the Texas Foundation Seed Service in Vernon, Texas, phone number (940) 552-6226.



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Citation

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For additional information about this and other plants, please contact your local USDA Service Center, NRCS field office, or Conservation District <<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>>, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov/>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/>>



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