



'Jose' Tall Wheatgrass

'Jose' tall wheatgrass (*Thinopyrum ponticum*) was released in 1966 by the Los Lunas Plant Materials Center in cooperation with the New Mexico State University Los Lunas Agricultural Science Center.

#### Description

'Jose' tall wheatgrass is a perennial, long-lived, cool-season bunchgrass with a uniform growth habit. The culms average four feet tall. The basal leaves are abundant, 20 to 24 inches long, semi-lax, and dark bluish-green.

#### Source

'Jose' tall wheatgrass was received at the former Albuquerque Soil Conservation Service Nursery in May, 1945 from the Beltsville National Observatory Nursery. Native to Europe, it was introduced to the United States via Australia.

#### Conservation Uses

'Jose' tall wheatgrass produces an abundance of forage. At Los Lunas, where the growing season averages 177 frost-free days, hay yields averaged 5½ tons of high-quality hay per acre when the crop was irrigated and fertilized, and cut two or three times per season to a stubble height of 6 inches. Forage samples clipped to a 10-inch height averaged 18.6 percent crude protein and 28 percent crude fiber.

In irrigated pasture trials near Los Lunas, cattle preferred 'Jose' to 'Largo'. This same preference by cattle has also been shown at other locations in New Mexico and Colorado.

#### Area of Adaptation and Use

'Jose' tall wheatgrass produces pasture and hay in irrigated areas of New Mexico and Colorado at elevations of up to 7,500 feet. It grows well in soils with a water table within two feet of the surface. It also performs well on saline or alkaline soils where other grasses or crops do not grow satisfactorily. 'Jose' tall wheatgrass requires at least 120 frost-free days for seed production – a slightly longer growing season than the variety requires for hay or pasture.

#### Ecological Considerations

'Jose' tall wheatgrass has not been affected by disease in the Los Lunas area. Inspect for spider mites in spring. Droughty looking spots where plants lack vigor may indicate mite infestations. To see the tiny mites, place a white card under the plants, and then slap the foliage briskly. If mites are present, they will fall on the card.

#### Seed and Plant Production

Plant 'Jose' tall wheatgrass in rows for easy cultivation and irrigation. Space the rows from 32 to 42 inches apart to accommodate conventional equipment. Seed at the rate of 8 to 10 lbs. pure live seed (pls) per acre. In most irrigated districts of New Mexico and Colorado, seeding should be done in the late summer. Plant the seed at a shallow depth, not deeper than 3/4 –inch, and irrigate up.

Apply nitrogen fertilizer on established stands, usually with the first irrigation in early spring at rates of 80 to 120 lbs. of available nitrogen per acre. If the soil is extremely dry, apply the fertilizer at the time of the second irrigation. Apply phosphorus as indicated by soil tests.

Harvest seed when most of the heads are in the hard-dough stage, or when about half of the seeds fall out if you whip the seed heads sharply against the palm of your hand. To check for natural shattering, hold a bundle of seed heads together and look down at the bundle from the top. If the seed have dropped, the seed heads look hollow you can combine the seed, but spread the seed materials thin enough to insure drying without heating. At medium elevations, seed will ripen in late August, two to three weeks earlier than 'Largo'. The aftermath left in the field from combining has considerable feed value, and it may be baled or grazed in the field.

#### Availability

*For seed or plant increase:* Foundation seed is available to certified growers for certified seed production through New Mexico State Seed Certification. The Los Lunas Plant Materials Center maintains foundation seed. This variety, like other wheat grasses, is cross-pollinated and must have adequate isolation to qualify as certified seed.

*For more information, contact:*  
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Los Lunas, NM 87031  
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<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/nmpmc/>

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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