

Introduction

These are Florida native switchgrasses (*Panicum virgatum*) which were collected vegetatively by NRCS personnel. Miami (PI 421901) was collected in 1965 adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean and U.S. Route 1 in the southern part of the city of Miami, in Dade County, Florida. Stuart (PI 422001) was collected in 1959 at Stuart, Martin County, Florida. Wabasso (PI 422000) was collected in 1959 at Wabasso, Indian River County, Florida.

Description

Switchgrasses are warm-season perennials resembling loose bunch-grass that form an erect habit from hard closely scaly rhizomes. The Florida native switchgrasses do not appear to undergo a dormancy period when grown in Florida.

Miami switchgrass is highly rhizomatous. It has coarse stems, has rough stiff upright leaves measuring an average of 1 inch wide and 20 inches in length, is blue in color and could be mistaken for *Panicum amarum* in the early growth stages. Its internodes are 7 inches, it is susceptible to heavy leaf rust, the seed matures later than the cultivar Alamo, and it attains an average height of 6.5 feet.

Stuart switchgrass is highly rhizomatous. It has coarse stems, moderate lodging, smooth fine leaf measuring an average of ½ inch wide and 24 inches in length, and

is light green in color. Its internodes are 9 inches, it is susceptible to mild leaf rust, its seed matures later than the cultivar Alamo and other Florida native switchgrasses, and it attains an average height of 7 feet.

Wabasso switchgrass is moderately rhizomatous. It has fine stems, lodges, has moderately smooth leaves measuring an average of ¾ inch wide and 20 inches in length, and is medium green in color;. Its internodes are 10 inches, it is susceptible to slight leaf rust, its seed matures earlier than other native switchgrasses but slightly later than the cultivar Alamo, and it attains an average height of 5 feet.

Use

Miami is the most salt tolerant of the Florida switchgrasses and has potential for use in dune stabilization as well as hay production, range site improvement, wildlife habitat improvement, cut green forage, waterway vegetation, mine reclamation, windbreaks, and bio-mass production.

Stuart and Wabasso have potential for use in hay production, range site improvement, wildlife habitat improvement, cut green forage, waterway vegetation, coastal area stabilization, mine reclamation, windbreaks, and bio-mass production.



Switchgrass seedhead

Adaptation

All three switchgrasses grow equally well on the highly calcareous soils of central Texas and the wet, acid soils of south Florida.

Establishment

The planting site should be adequately prepared by disking and packing to control weed competition. Plants should be planted vegetatively 2 to 3 feet apart at a depth of 6 inches to ensure the root system is adequately covered. Spring planting, March to May, can be effective if supplemental irrigation is available. Without irrigation, the planting season should be June 1 to August 1.

Management

The Florida native switchgrasses do not appear to have a dormancy period. Seed produced from these native grasses has low germination, at approximately 1%. Prescribed or controlled burning is an important management tool to maintain forage quality and grass vigor of these warm-season species.

Availability

Information on switchgrasses can be obtained by contacting the Brooksville Plant Materials Center.



For More Information

Brooksville Plant Materials Center
14119 Broad Street
Brooksville, Florida 34601
Phone: 352-796-9600
<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/flpmc/>

or

Plant Materials Specialist for Florida
P.O. Box 141510
Gainesville, FL 32614
Phone: 352-338-9544

or

any USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service office

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Switchgrasses for Southern Florida

Panicum virgatum



Miami



Stuart



Wabasso

Brooksville Plant Materials Center, Florida