

'Americus' Indiangrass

(*Sorghastrum nutans* (L.) Nash.)

A Conservation Plant Released by the USDA NRCS Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center, Americus, Georgia



Americus Indiangrass in Bloom

'Americus' indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans* (L.) Nash.) is a cultivar released in 2002 in cooperation with the Alabama Crop Improvement Association.

Description

'Americus' is a native perennial warm-season bunch grass. It produces flowering culms 6 to 8 feet tall and vegetative culms up to 3.5 feet tall. The booting stage occurs in late August to mid-September. The bright yellow inflorescence appears in mid-September to early October. Seed matures in mid-October to early November.

Source

'Americus' results from a collection of 93 southeastern accessions of indiangrass. It originated from the cross of two accessions of indiangrass germplasm from Alabama with two accessions from Georgia.

Conservation Uses

'Americus' provides forage for stocker cattle however, it is promising as maintenance forage for cow-calf operations. In the Georgia piedmont it produced 8643 lbs/acre of dry matter under high fertility conditions; in the coastal plain it produced 2547 lbs/acre dry matter.

'Americus' can be part of a native warm-season grass mix to provide structure for upland birds including northern bobwhite quail. It can be utilized in longleaf pine understory restoration. It can also constitute part of a native mix for pollinator habitat.

Area of Adaptation and Use

'Americus' was evaluated in multiple years and locations in the piedmont and coastal plain of Georgia. It is tolerant of most upland soils, but is most productive on moderately well to well drained soils. It is primarily adapted to sites in Alabama and Georgia but should be generally adapted throughout most of the southeastern U.S.

Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings

Seedbed preparation should begin well in advance of planting. Establish a clean, weed-free seedbed with either tillage or herbicides. The planting site should be firm with accumulated soil moisture. 'Americus' can be planted several ways. Seed (with the awns and hairs attached-bearded) can be planted using a native grass drill with a fluffy seed box or with a broadcast spreader using a carrier such as pelleted lime to help the seed flow. Seed with the awns and hairs removed (debearded) can be planted with grass drills or broadcast spreaders. When seeding with broadcast spreaders the seedbed should be cultipacked before and after seeding. Seed should be planted 1/8 to 1/4 inch deep. **Seed placement is critical.** Planting times may vary, occurring after the last spring frost while soil moisture levels are still high. Phosphorus and potassium fertility should be met before planting but **nitrogen should not be applied** until the stand is established. Applying nitrogen at planting increases the possibility of severe weed completion. For pure stands of forage seeding rates range from 8 to 10 pounds pure live seed (PLS) per acre. A wildlife planting mixed with grasses and forbs is seeded at 1.5 pounds PLS per acre. 'Americus' should not be grazed the first year after planting. Rotational grazing should be practiced after the first year. It should not be grazed lower than 8 to 10 inches from soil level. Grazing to lower heights severely reduces vigor and stand percentage. Cattle can be returned after grass is approximately 20 to 24 inches tall. 'Americus' Indiangrass like other native warm-season grasses responds well to prescribed fire. A spring burn will remove old growth, recycle nutrients tied up in standing dead vegetation, control brush invasion and produce succulent regrowth. Check with the state forestry commission before burning. A combined program of mowing, herbicide application, and prescribed burning

provides the best results for controlling weeds. NRCS specialists can assist landowners with plans to properly manage this grass.



Prescribed Burn of Americus Indiangrass

Ecological Considerations

This cultivar does not have any particular resistance to disease or insects beyond those commonly found in the species. During unusually wet and humid summers rust and other diseases can adversely affect indiangrass. It spreads by rhizome and seed dispersal. Routine management practices control weediness of indiangrass.

Seed and Plant Production

Seed production fields should be planted in a similar manner as forage production. Seed yield varies greatly depending on weather. At Americus, Ga. yields ranged from 27 to 166 lbs/Ac. A standard combine is used for harvest. Harvest dates in southwest Georgia are normally October 15- November 5.

Availability

For conservation use: Seed is being commercially available.

For more information, contact:
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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/>>



Americus Indiangrass Field Planting for Wildlife

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