

LONGSPIKE TRIDENS

Tridens strictus (Nutt.) Nash

Plant Symbol = TRST2

Contributed by: USDA, NRCS, East Texas Plant
Materials Center



R. Alan Shadow
USDA, NRCS East Texas Plant Materials Center

Alternate Names

Longspike Tridens

Uses

Landscaping: Long Spike Tridens shows excellent potential as a “pioneer species” for soil stabilization in disturbed areas due to its ability to tolerate wide ranges of environmental conditions, excellent germination, and good seedling vigor.

Forage: Many members of the *Tridens* genus are grazed to some extent by livestock, and have moderate palatability. Longspike Tridens is no exception. Though members of this genus are not as

favorable as other forage species, their presence often indicates fair range conditions. Longspike Tridens may provide forage in marginal areas where more desirable species have difficulty surviving.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant’s current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description and Adaptation

Longspike Tridens is a short lived, warm season, perennial, bunch grass. As its name suggests, it produces a compact seed head on a long, “spike” like stalk. The seed heads are 4 - 12 inches in length and a half inch in width. The seed of this species is very small, having approximately 2,138,000 seeds per pound. Mature plants are between 2 and 5 feet in height, and produce smooth flat blades that can be up to 20 inches long. Small hairs, or pubescents, are located on the upper surface of the leaves, near the base of the stem. The seed head, or panicle, may also have a hint of purple coloration.

Distribution: Longspike Tridens is widely distributed throughout the Southeastern United States. It can be found as far north as Illinois and Pennsylvania and westward across Texas. This species will tolerate a wide range of soil conditions, however, it favors coarse to medium textured soils. It is commonly associated with upland areas, but is also a component of coastal grasslands. This species will tolerate moist areas as long as the soil does not stay inundated with water. It is often present in disturbed areas such as road side ditches and right of ways, and can tolerate soil pH conditions between 3.5 and 7.

Establishment

Germination tests conducted at the East Texas Plant Material Center in 2007 showed this species to have excellent germination. Tests on seed lots from 2003 and 2005 produced 71% and 90% germination respectively. Due to the size of the seed, it should be handled in a similar manner as small seeded legumes such as clovers. Seed may be broadcast or drilled into a well prepared, firm seed bed in spring at a rate of 20 PLS per square foot. Planting depth should not exceed ¼ inch. When broadcast seeding, it may be necessary to mix the seed with a spreading agent such

as sand to help evenly distribute the seed, and a light drag or cultipacker should be used to cover the seed.

Management

Longspike Tridens is moderately tolerant of burning. Depending on the intensity of the fire, the seed spike may or may not be removed. Clipping in the fall is sometimes helpful to remove the long seed spike. Longspike Tridens is very drought tolerant and has low fertility requirements, making this a hearty and relatively worry free species once established. The seed requires no stratification process before planting, and shows excellent seedling vigor. It is capable of reseeding itself under ideal conditions.

Pests and Potential Problems

There are no known significant pests or disease problems for this species.

Environmental Concerns

There are no known environmental concerns associated with Longspike Tridens.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

There are no known improved cultivars for this species at this time.

Prepared By:

R. Alan Shadow, Soil Conservationist, East Texas Plant Materials Center, Nacogdoches, Texas

Species Coordinator:

Edited:

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

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