

• **SWITCHGRASS (*Panicum virgatum*)**  
For Wildlife and Erosion Control Plantings  
In Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin

Description: Switchgrass is a vigorous native warm season perennial grass. It occurs over much of the Great Plains area. It usually grows 3 to 5 feet high. Leaves are about 1/4 to 1/2 inch wide and green to bluish green in color. It has heavy vigorous roots and underground stems. Stalks are relatively stiff causing it to stand up well even after maturity. It is relatively low in nutritive value but is palatable to livestock.

Blackwell is a variety developed by the Manhattan, Kansas, Plant Materials Center from a collection near Blackwell, Oklahoma. This variety is more resistant to stem rust than most native switchgrass. Blackwell is an upland type of medium height with medium-large stems. It shows good seedling vigor and ranks high in leafiness.

Cave-in-Rock is from a collection made near Cave-in-Rock, Illinois. It is a coarse, late-maturing type with good straw strength.

Kanlow is a tall coarse, productive variety especially adapted to lowlands subject to flooding.

Purpose: To provide herbaceous winter nesting and escape cover for wildlife. For stabilization of critical areas including highway banks, earth fills, minespoils and similar areas where the fertility will not be maintained at a level that will support other grasses.

Standard for Comparison: Smooth bromegrass, tall fescue or timothy will normally be considered the standard.

Site: Switchgrass is adapted to well drained intermediate texture soils. Kanlow is adapted to lowlands. Quite satisfactory growth is made on light soils.



Planting Method: For wildlife plantings prepare seedbed by plowing or disking. On critical areas for erosion control shape the area as needed. Prepare a clean seedbed with sufficient loose soil for seed cover. Broadcast seedings are commonly made for erosion control. If desired, row seedings are satisfactory for wildlife plantings. On some sites a grain drill or other seeder may be used. On areas where equipment can be used, cultipacking before and after seeding will provide a firm seedbed and cover seed to desired depth. Shallow covering of seed is essential, not more than 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep. Take tension off drill disks to permit shallow seeding.

Fertilizer: Apply moderate amount of nitrogen, phosphate and potash. Example: 200-300 pounds of 12-12-12 fertilizer or equivalent.

Rate of Seeding: Switchgrass has approximately 390,000 seeds per pound. Wildlife plantings--8 pounds per acre. Critical areas--10 pounds per acre.

Date of Seeding: Seed as early in spring as seedbed can be prepared.

Management: If site permits use of equipment, reduce weed competition by high mowing. Switchgrass is slow to establish but should eventually dominate the site. After establishment, use herbicides as needed to suppress invasion of undesirable plants. Selective herbicides can be used for control of cool season perennial grasses. Protect from livestock.

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