

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

PLANT GUIDE

This planting guide is provided to assist in the final evaluation of PMT-1733 alkali sacaton as a protective cover on saline, saline-alkali, or alkali problem areas.

Species: Sporobolus airoides
Common name: Alkali sacaton
Accession No.: PMT-1733

Description: Alkali sacaton (Sporobolus airoides) is a native warm-season, perennial bunchgrass found from Washington and South Dakota south into Mexico. It grows from 1 to 3 feet (.3-1 a) tall and is abundant in parts of the Southwest on low alkaline flats. It also grows on gypsum soils and open plains. This grass will tiller extensively on moist sites. Livestock utilize this species well during the growing season, but it becomes unpalatable when mature and is considered fair winter forage when feeding protein supplements.

PMT-1733 was selected because of the vigor indicated on saline and alkaline areas.

Areas in Which Field Plantings Should Be Established:

All MLRA's in Oklahoma.
All MLRA's in Kansas.

Site Selection, Establishment, Maintenance, and Evaluation:

- a. Soils - Alkali sacaton prefers deep, fertile lowland, moist sites that occasionally receive extra water, but is adapted to saline, saline-alkali, and alkali soils. It withstands flooding and tolerates considerable deposition of sand or silt. In selecting sites for field plantings, emphasis should be placed on sites having saline or alkaline soils.
- b. For seedbed preparation, seeding dates, and seeding methods, refer to field office technical guides.
- c. Seed mixture - Seed 1 pound pure live seed (1.1 kg/ha) of alkali sacaton per acre. Other grasses which are compatible are Canada wildrye, switchgrass, tall wheatgrass, and western wheatgrass. When planting a mixture of adapted grasses, apply 50-60 pure live seed per square foot (533 to 646 pure live seed per square meter). There are 1,700,000 seeds per pound (765,000/kg) of alkali sacaton.

Evaluating a New Stand:

Establishment of an adequate stand may be difficult unless rain or irrigation is timely. Once established, the plant requires little maintenance. It is fairly drought tolerant once established. A suitable stand is considered to be 1-2 plants per square foot (10-20 plants per square meter).

Stand Management:

- a. Weed control - Weeds are not generally considered a problem, considering the soils and site.
- b. Grazing - Do not allow livestock to graze the area until the objective of establishment has been met. Then only very light grazing should occur, if at all. Cattle graze alkali sacaton readily during the growing season. It is not considered (good winter forage).
- c. Mow - Leave a 4-inch (10 cm) height when cutting for hay. Best quality production is from grass mowed about July 1 or at the same period as other native grass species. One mowing per year is recommended.

(over)

Evaluation:

The preferred standard is tall wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, Canada wildrye, or switchgrass.