



# CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM PLANT GUIDE

## THICKSPIKE WHEATGRASS

**Cultivars:** Critana, Schwendimar,  
Bannock, Sodar

**Seed Size:** 156,000 seeds/pound

**Form:** Sod forming grass, 24-42”  
tall, narrow-spike seedhead

**Area of Adaptation:** Thickspike wheatgrass is adapted to areas of the Inland Pacific Northwest that receive between 8 and 24 inches of annual precipitation. Thickspike wheatgrass is a sod forming grass native throughout western North America. It is one of the few rhizomatous grasses adapted to the dryer regions of the Inland Pacific Northwest. It exhibits moderate to excellent drought tolerance and tolerates shallow soil fairly well. ‘Critana’ originates from north-central Montana and grows better on heavier soils than the other Thickspike cultivars. ‘Schwendimar’ originates from sand dunes along the Columbia River. It does very well on droughty, sandy soils. ‘Bannock’ was selected from a planting in Southern Idaho. It also does well on sandy, droughty soils. ‘Sodar’ is commonly referred to as a streambank wheatgrass although it is very drought tolerant.

**Seeding:** Thickspike wheatgrass is fairly large seeded but must be seeded no deeper than 3/4”. A firm seedbed that allows for good seed to soil contact improves emergence. Seeding should be completed late in the fall or very early in the spring. It germinates readily and grows very rapidly after emergence. Rhizome development generally does not occur the first year.

It should be seeded with a long-lived bunchgrass in dryer regions.

Broadcast seeding should only be considered for fields that are too loose to pack. Light harrowing can improve stand establishment. Harrowing immediately prior to broadcasting is generally superior to harrowing after broadcasting. Harrowing after seeding can result in deep seed burial.

**Management & Uses:** Thickspike wheatgrass is commonly used in mine reclamation and soil stabilization plantings. It typically produces large amounts of forage for a few years but production drops once the stand becomes sod bound. Studies at Lind, WA show that Thickspike wheatgrass stands decrease substantially after several years but persist at reduced populations. Disturbance to old depaupered stands will revitalize plants and the stand will improve.

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