

REDTOP

Agrostis gigantea Roth.

plant symbol = AGGI2

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program



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USDA NRCS 1989
Midwestern Wetland Flora
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Alternate Names

Agrostis alba auct. non L.

Uses

Redtop is used for erosion control, pastures, temporary grass in turf seedings and occasionally for hay. It is often used for stabilizing critical areas, such as ditch and channel banks, strip mine spoils, and grassed waterways because it germinates very rapidly. It may be our most widely adapted grass.

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

Redtop is a rhizomatous perennial grass that makes a coarse but fairly dense turf. Leaves are narrow and sharp and about 3/8 inch wide. The stems are slender, growing to 30 or 40 inches tall. The inflorescence is pyramidal and reddish in color--hence the common

name of redtop. There are approximately 4,990,000 seeds per pound.

Adaptation and Distribution

Redtop is widespread in the Northeast. It has better growth in the humid North than in the warmer climates of the Southern portions. It will grow under a wide variety of soil and moisture conditions. It grows on very acid soils and poor clayey soils of low fertility. It is drought-resistant and also grows well on poorly drained soils.

Redtop is distributed throughout most of the United States. For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

Establishment

Because of its tiny seed, redtop should have a firm, well-prepared seedbed. It may be sown in early spring or late summer. Seeding depth is 1/4 inch. Redtop is seldom seeded alone, except for temporary cover. Rates of seeding will vary depending upon purpose, and whether seeded alone or in mixtures. In mixtures, rates of 1 to 2 pounds per acre are generally used. For pure stands, seeding rates are from 4 to 5 pounds per acre. The higher rates are used for temporary critical area stabilization. Redtop grows rapidly after seeding and excessive seeding rates are not recommended, particularly in mixtures. When used for erosion control on critical areas, fertilizing is essential to give rapid cover.

Management

Redtop can be a significant forage producer in hay fields, particularly at the first cutting, but it is generally not highly regarded as a forage grass. It does not withstand continuous close grazing. It will persist longer on critical areas since the grass is not often harvested, but will disappear under frequent, close mowing. It will respond to fertilizer and lime.

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

One certified midwestern variety is currently available, named 'Streaker'. Common redtop seed is also available.

Prepared By & Species Coordinator:

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31Jan2002 JLK

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

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