USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Plant Guide

WOOLGRASS

Scirpus cyperinus (L.) Kunth

Plant Symbol = SCCY

Contributed by: USDA NRCS National Plant Data Center

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@ PLANTS

Alternative Names
cotton grass bulrush, common wool-grass

Uses
Ethnobotanic: Woolgrass stems were woven to make matting and ropes. The fruiting tops of the plant were used as a resilient material for stuffing and making pillows (Moerman 1998). The small rushes were used in making woven mats and storage bags (Ibid.).

Status
Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status, such as, state noxious status and wetland indicator values.

Description
General: Sedge family (Cyperaceae). Woolgrass (*Scirpus cyperinus*) is a tall perennial with slender culms. This species is an erect grasslike plant that commonly grows four to five feet (Tiner 1987). The leaves are smooth, flat, elongated, and up to ½ inch wide. The flowers occur in dense rounded clusters of greenish-brown spiklets arising from the top of the culm. The fruits are yellow-gray to white achenes surpassed by long red-brown bristles at maturity.

Distribution: *Scirpus cyperinus* ranges from New England and New York westward across Ohio to Iowa, and southward to North Carolina and Oklahoma. It is also found from Newfoundland to Minnesota south to Florida and Louisiana (Tiner 1987). For current distribution, please consult the Plant profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Adaptation
Woolgrass is found in irregularly flooded tidal fresh marshes, inland marshes, wet meadows, and swamps. This species grows best in areas with wet soil moisture content and is seldom found in more than a few inches of water (Voss 1972). It prefers peat or sandy soil types in full to partially sunny locations.

Establishment
Propagation by Seed: *Scirpus cyperinus* seeds should be sown in a cold frame as soon as they are ripe in a pot standing in three centimeters of water. The seeds germinate quickly. When they are large enough to handle, plant them into their permanent positions in early summer.

Large divisions can be planted directly into their permanent positions. It is best to pot smaller divisions and grow them in a cold frame, out-planting when they are well established in the summer.

Management
After seed planting, water level over *Scirpus cyperinus* seeds should be maintained at one foot for two weeks. Periodic flooding up to three feet should occur until the seeds are established.

Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)
Available through wetland plant nurseries. Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office for more information. Look in the phone book under "United States Government." The Natural Resources Conservation Service will be listed under the subheading "Department of Agriculture."

References
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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>