

HAMPTON GERmplasm BIG BLUESTEM

Andropogon gerardii Vitman



Hampton germplasm big bluestem was released in 2007 by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Booneville Plant Materials Center (PMC) in Booneville, AR. The original seed source for Hampton was collected in Wayne County, MO.

Hampton germplasm big bluestem was named in honor of Jeral Hampton of Booneville, AR.

Uses

Hampton is recommended for environmental enhancement and forage production. It is best used in mixed stands of native prairie species for prairie restoration, wildlife shelter for nesting birds, and highway revegetation. Hampton may also be used as a nutrient sink in riparian buffer strips for water quality improvement. It may also be used in many types of conservation plantings such as buffers and vegetative barriers. As a forage crop, Hampton may be grazed if given appropriate management (i.e. rotational grazing) to prevent damage to the plant stand.

Description

Hampton germplasm big bluestem is a perennial warm-season grass that forms bunches or clumps. Mature foliage height ranges from 3 to 6 feet tall. The foliage is distinguished by a blue coloration at the base of the stem. The leaf blades are flat and smooth on the bottom and rough on the top. Blades range from less than 1/2 inches wide to 24 inches long. Flowers are produced from July to October.

0 clusters that resemble a turkey's foot. Flower clusters are 2 to 4 inches long. Mature plants have a reddish cast after frost. There are approximately 140,000 seed per pound.

Adaptation

Hampton grows best on well-drained, fertile soils and is best adapted to moist, sandy or clay loams but also occurs in dry or shallow soils. It does well in full sun or partial shade. It tolerates a wide range of soil pHs, from fairly acidic to moderately alkaline. It is recommended for use in AR, southern MO, and eastern OK (USDA Hardiness Zones 6b, 7a and b, and 8a).

Establishment

Hampton should be planted as early in the spring as possible. Conventional tillage should be used where practical. The seeding rate should be 8 to 10 pounds PLS and planted at a depth of 1/4 to 1/2 inches (3/4 inches on very droughty sites). No nitrogen fertilizer should be applied during the establishment year unless no weed competition is expected. If pH is below 5.5, lime is recommended during site preparation or the fall prior to no-till plantings.



Management

All native warm-season grasses have relatively low seedling vigor compared to weeds and cool-season grasses; therefore, control of competition is essential. High mowing (above the bluestem seedlings) is a common method of weed control. Selected herbicides may have application during the first 1 to 2 years of establishment. Harvests or grazing should be after the plant is 20 inches tall and cut no lower than 8 inches. An 8 inch height should be maintained 1 month prior to frost. After a killing frost, plants may be grazed to 8 inches; however, forage quality is greatly reduced.

Foundation seed of Hampton will be maintained at the Booneville Plant Materials Center in Booneville, AR.

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