

# *Paloma* Indian Ricegrass



- FIRST NAMED VARIETY OF INDIAN RICEGRASS
- SUITABLE FOR SOIL STABILIZATION AND RANGE REVEGETATION
- WIDELY ADAPTED
- SUPERIOR SEED AND FORAGE PRODUCTION



**Cooperative Extension Service**

# *Paloma* Indian Ricegrasss

'Paloma', a new variety of Indian ricegrass [*Oryzopsis hymenoides* (Roem, and Schult.) Ricker], has been released by the agricultural experiment stations of New Mexico State University, the University of Arizona, and Colorado State University; the New Mexico State Highway Department; and the Soil Conservation Service of the USDA.

In trials at Los Lunas, New Mexico, Paloma was superior in seed and forage production to the majority of other strains of Indian ricegrass with which it was compared. Tests at Las Cruces indicated that Paloma had better stands after four years than most of the other accessions tested.

## DESCRIPTION

The original source of this warm-season, perennial bunchgrass is west of Pueblo, Colorado.

Height ranges from 12 to 24 inches (30 to 60 cm). The rolled slender leaves are about as long as the stems. Each leaf grows from the base of the plant. Seedheads are an open panicle with spreading hairlike branches.

Mature Paloma seeds are brown to black with a fringe of dense hair surrounding each one. The seeds of this variety, while not completely round, are less elongated than those of many northern strains of this species.

The plants are quite attractive when the seeds are mature.

## AREA OF ADAPTATION AND USE

Indian ricegrass is widely distributed in western United States. It occurs at elevations of 2,000 to 10,000 feet (600 to 3,000 m) but is most abundant from low semi-arid rangeland through the higher elevation pinyon-juniper zones. At the higher altitudes, it is generally found on ridgetops or on dry slopes facing south or west. It is found on a variety of soils ranging from shallow to deep with various textures. This plant is one of the first species to invade disturbed sandy sites where it is adapted. It is not adapted to poorly drained sites. The species is reported to be one of the most drought-tolerant native grasses in the United States.

Paloma can be used to stabilize soils and revegetate rangelands in areas of low precipitation, following reduction or destruction of vegetation by surface mining, construction activities, brush control, overgrazing, or fires.

This grass is palatable to all classes of livestock. Birds, especially mourning doves and pheasants, and small rodents relish the plump, nutritious seeds.

## FORAGE PRODUCTION

Indian ricegrass is an important forage grass throughout the semiarid ranges. The nutritious forage cures exceptionally well, so it is of special value on winter ranges. Paloma was superior or equal to most Indian ricegrass strains tested in forage production in Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico. Problems with diseases or insects were not evident in these plantings.

A seeding rate of 6 pounds per acre (7 kg/ha) of pure live seed (based on tetrazolium strain test) is recommended for rangeland seedings. Seed stored for longer than a year after harvest generally results in a higher percent initial field germination than does fresh seed.

## SEED PRODUCTION

The average seed yield for nine years in one planting at Los Lunas was 162 pounds per acre (181 kg/ha) of pure live seed.

Sow seed in the fall through mid-winter (February) 0.75 to 1.75 inches (20 to 45 mm) deep. The deeper placement is recommended for lighter or sandy soils.

Good stands have also been obtained from plantings made at other times of the year under certain conditions. The seed may be sown on a flat surface or beside corrugations in irrigated fields. Some seedlings have died from damping-off disease when the soil was kept too wet.

The recommended planting rate is 4 pounds per acre (4 kg/ha) of seed in rows 30 to 40 inches (80 to 100 cm) apart to permit cultivation as needed.

A soil test is recommended as an aid in determining fertilizer needs. In lieu of other guides, annual fertilizer rates of 80 pounds of nitrogen per acre (90 kg/ha) can be used as a starting point.

Seed is generally ripe by mid-June at Los Lunas and by late May at Las Cruces, New Mexico. It can be harvested with a small grain combine.

## SEED SUPPLY

Limited quantities of foundation Paloma Indian ricegrass seed are available to growers through crop improvement associations and nautral resource or soil and water conservation districts. Seed of this variety **is** available commercially.

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