

# 'Paloma' Indian Ricegrass

*Oryzopsis hymenoides* (Roem. and Schult) Ricker

A Conservation Plant Release by USDA NRCS Los Lunas Plant Materials Center



'Paloma' Indian ricegrass (*Oryzopsis hymenoides*)

'Paloma' is a variety of Indian ricegrass [*Oryzopsis hymenoides* (Roem. and Schult) Ricker] that has been released by the New Mexico State University Agricultural Science Center, the University of Arizona, the Colorado State University, the New Mexico Department of Transportation, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Los Lunas Plant Materials Center.

## Description

Plant 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 hairy branches. Mature 'Paloma' Indian ricegrass 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 seedheads are mature.

## Source

The original source of this cool-season, perennial bunchgrass was found west of Pueblo, Colorado.

## Conservation Uses

'Paloma' Indian ricegrass can be used to stabilize soils and re-vegetate rangelands in areas of low precipitation, and in areas where vegetation has been reduced or destroyed by surface mining, construction activities, brush control, overgrazing, or fires.

In addition, this grass is palatable to all classes of livestock. Birds, especially mourning doves and pheasants, and small rodents relish the plump, nutritious seeds. Indian ricegrass is an important forage grass throughout the semi-arid ranges. The nutritious forage cures exceptionally well making it a 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.

## Area of Adaptation and Use

'Paloma' Indian ricegrass is widely distributed in the western United States. It occurs at elevations of 2,000 to 10,000 feet (600 to 3,000 m), but it is most abundant from low semi-arid rangeland through the higher elevation pinyon-juniper zones. At the higher elevations, it is typically found on ridge tops or on dry slopes facing south or west. It is found on a variety of soils ranging from shallow-to-deep, and having 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.

## Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings

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

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

The recommended seeding rate is 4 pounds per acre (4 kg/ha) planted 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 in Los Lunas, and by late May in Las Cruces, New Mexico. It can be harvested with a small grain combine.

If you are seeding rangeland, a recommend seeding rate is 6 pls pounds per acre (7 kg/ha) (based on tetrazolium strain test). Seed stored for longer than a year after harvest typically results in a higher percentage of initial field germination than fresh seed.

### **Ecological Considerations**

Problems with diseases or insects were not evident in these plantings.

### **Seed and Plant Production**

In the seeding trials at Los Lunas, 'Paloma' Indian ricegrass was superior in seed and forage production to the majority of other strains of Indian ricegrass with which it was compared. Tests at the New Mexico state Seed Certification program indicated that 'Paloma' had better stands after four years than most other accessions that were tested. The annual, average seed yield for nine years from one planting at Los Lunas was 162 pounds per acre (181 kg/ha) of pure live seed (pls).

### **Availability**

*For conservation use:* 'Paloma' Indian ricegrass seed is available through commercial growers.

*For seed or plant increase:* Limited quantities of foundation 'Paloma' Indian ricegrass seed are available to growers through crop improvement associations and natural resource or soil and water conservation districts.

*For more information, contact:*  
Los Lunas Plant Materials Center

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<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/nmpmc/>

### **Citation**

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For additional information about this and other plants, please contact your local USDA Service Center, NRCS field office, or Conservation District <<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>>, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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