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## PLANT FACT SHEET

### Yellow Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) Fact Sheet



Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) is a perennial, warm-season, native grass. Growing between 3-5' tall it is one of the grasses that once dominated the central and eastern prairies. It is easily recognized by the "rifle-sight" ligule that appears at the point where the stem and leaf meet. This characteristic is also easily distinguished in young plants. At the point of attachment the leaf blade also narrows. The golden brown seed head is a narrow, single, plume like panicle. The light and fluffy seed has

small, attached awns and there is approximately 175,000 seed in a pound.

Indiangrass can be used in erosion control, as a livestock forage and makes an excellent deer feed. For erosion control it is ideal for use in critical seeding area, as a roadside cover as well as areas subject to wind erosion. Indiangrass also provides an excellent habitat for wildlife.

Indian grass grows well in well-drained, deep floodplain soils, although it is also tolerant to poor or excessively drained soils. Soils can range from acid to alkaline and have textures from clay to sand.

Like most warm season grasses Indiangrass requires a soil temperature above 50 degrees and a moist firm seedbed for reliable germination. The best time for planting is between early May and late June. Debearding to remove the awns is recommended to ensure that the seed flows freely. Areas to be planted should be free of perennial and/or noxious weeds. As indicated previously a firm seedbed is required and this can be achieved by using a roller packer to enable the seed to be planted at the recommended depth of  $\frac{1}{2}$  -  $\frac{3}{4}$ ".

The seeding rate for solid stands is 6 – 8 pounds PLS per acre. If broadcast seeding is employed the rate should be 12 – 15 pounds per acre. If the planting by broadcast it's necessary to incorporate the seed via tracking with heavy equipment to improve the soil to seed bond. Despite having a strong seeding vigor, stands tend to develop slowly if in competition with broadleaf weeds and/or heavy growths of cool-season grasses. Cool-season grasses must be controlled with a contact herbicide prior to seeding. Indiangrass does demonstrate a tolerance to such herbicides. If sowing in fine textured soils with persistent weeds no-till establishment may be necessary.

The most common cause of failure of warm-season grasses is a loose seedbed.

Conventionally tilled seedbeds should be packed before and especially after seeding. The seedbed should be firm enough to show only a light imprint when stepped on. When using a no-till drill, be sure the coulter furrows are closed to avoid seed exposure and drying. This can be accomplished by cultipacking after the drilling operation.

Fertilization to moderate levels of phosphorus and potassium are recommended for establishment. Nitrogen applications are not recommended until the grass is established and well above the competing weeds. Fertilizer may be applied late in the first summer of establishment at a rate of 20 to 40 pounds per acre of phosphorus and potassium or in the early summer of the second year at 40 to 80 pounds per acre rate. In future years fertilize as needed to enhance vigor and production of forage. For critical area seeding, no additional fertilization is necessary.

If well-established stands of Indian grass are properly managed and maintained, they should

not require replanting. Poor stands can be rejuvenated by using proper management practices, such as controlled grazing, the application of recommended rates of herbicides and fertilizer, and prescribed burning, where permitted, before the beginning of spring growth. Nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium fertilizer should be applied according to soil tests.

In rotational grazing systems, remove no more than ½ the above ground growth (no shorter than 8 to 12 inches). With care, the stand will last indefinitely. Forage quality will remain high until the seed head emerges. Grazing should begin from mid to late June when grasses reach 12 to 16 inches in height. Overgrazing can damage the stand and should be stopped when the plants are grazed to within 6 inches of the ground. If re-growth of more than 12 inches takes place, the plants can be re-grazed to 6 to 12 inches. Leaving this much stubble before frost allows the plants to store carbohydrates and ensures the production of vigorous plant growth in the spring.

**Seed Available in the Following Quantities**

Packet	Ounce	Pound	50# Bag	Wholesale	Retail	Dropship
\$2.00 + SH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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